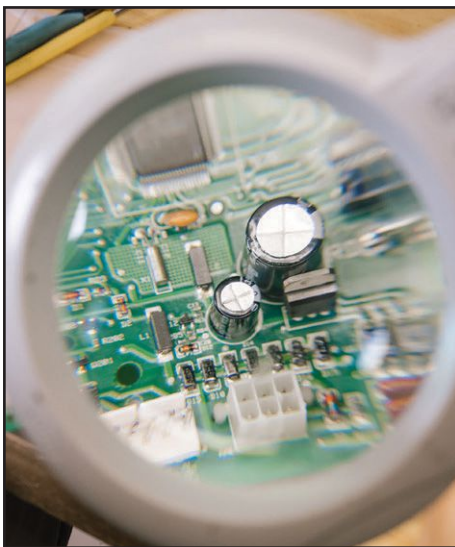




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A 'CIRCUITOUS' PATH

From TVs and VCRs to Laundromat Circuit Boards,
Mountain Electronics Has Taken a Roundabout Way to Success



Mountain Electronics first opened its doors in 1999 as a home appliance repair shop, primarily fixing televisions and VCRs.

Yes, VCRs... remember those?

Then, one day, a local laundromat owner brought in a broken circuit board from one of the store's stack dryers. Jason Berry, the owner of Mountain Electronics at the time, was able to repair that control board - and the experience inspired him to do some further research into the laundromat industry.

He soon discovered the Coin Laundry Association and immediately placed a classified ad promoting his services in

the CLA's trade publication. As a result, laundry circuit boards in need of repair began showing up at the shop. Within a couple of years, Berry had shifted the focus of the business from residential appliance repair to industrial circuit board repair for two separate industries: commercial laundry and power plants.

In 2003, Berry hired his first employee, George Brasington, to help repair the laundry circuit boards, while he focused on the power plant controls. A year later, George's wife, Whitney, came aboard to manage shipping and receiving.

As the business continued to grow, Berry realized he needed to narrow the

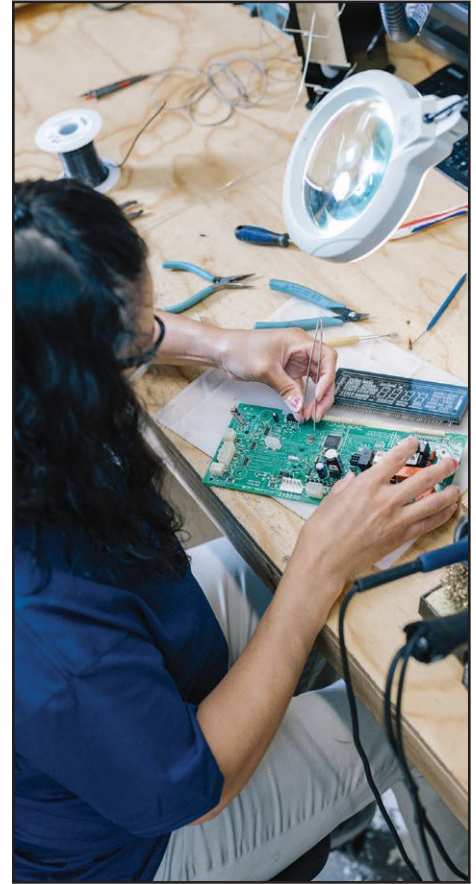
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scope of repairs to just one industry. In 2005, the Brasingtons purchased Mountain Electronics and the commercial laundry end of the business, while Berry retained the power plant repairs under a new business entity.

Under the Brasingtons' leadership, Mountain Electronics has experienced steady growth. When first purchased, the business was run from a 150-square-foot trailer on the couple's property.

However, in 2008, they hired their first electronics technician, Damien Woody, who remains a cornerstone of the business. A year later, Lucy Doll joined the team and has been providing outstanding customer service ever since.

Thanks to its many dedicated employees, Mountain Electronics was forced to relocate to three ever-larger locations over the next decade. Finally, in 2018, the company settled into a former textile manufacturing facility, just on the outskirts of Burnsville, N.C.



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Then, in 2020, the pandemic struck – but so did opportunity for Mountain Electronics.

“Running a business through COVID-19 was a challenge, as it was for most people,” Whitney Brasington said. “However, with every challenge, there’s an opportunity for growth in some way. One silver lining of the pandemic was that it gave us the opportunity to completely reorganize our repair process – something our lead tech, Damien, had envisioned for years.”

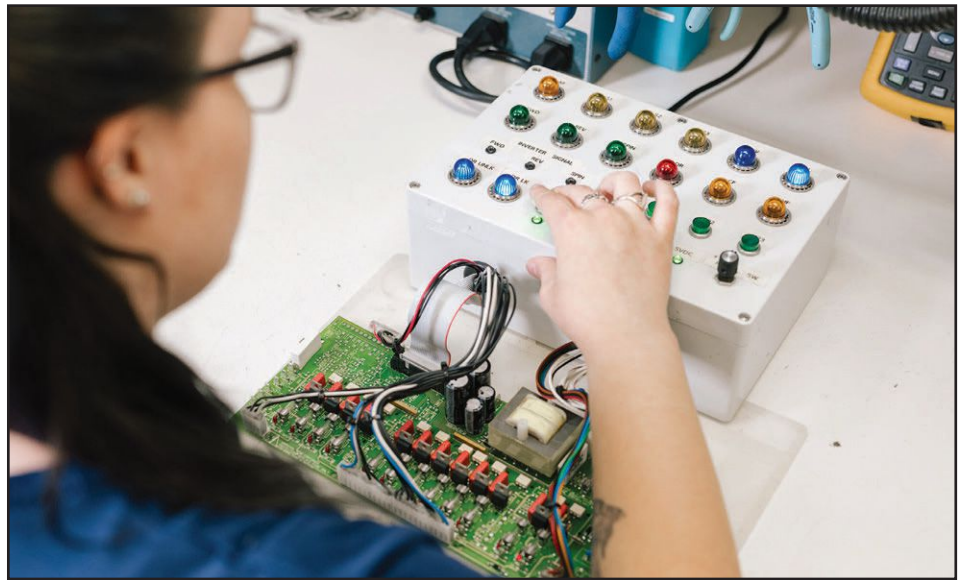
Another opportunity presented itself in 2020 when Carolyn Johnson – owner of one of Mountain Electronics’ biggest competitors, ALJ Electronics – contacted the Brasingtons.

“She was making some big life changes and wanted to sell the business that her father, Al Johnson, had started in the 1980s,” Whitney explained. “He had pioneered the laundry electronics repair industry. Buying ALJ, which was located in California, helped us expand our West Coast customer base and gave us a large store of parts and components that otherwise would have been hard to obtain with the recent supply chain shortages. Because of this, we’ve been able to maintain our one- to two-week turnaround time throughout the pandemic, which is critical to our customers.”

A quick turnaround is just one of the goals Mountain Electronics strives to maintain. Its overall mission is “to provide fast, reliable circuit board repairs and outstanding customer service to make maintenance easy and keep repair costs low for the commercial laundry industry.”

Last year, the company repaired more than 37,000 laundry circuit boards. To keep track of all those boards, the business has implemented an impressive order management system. The software tracks orders from the time a customer creates a shipping label on the company’s website through the entire remanufacturing process.

Mountain Electronics also has added a new inventory management system that integrates all of the boards in stock onto the company website, helping



to maintain a consistent stock of components and avoid delays in the repair process. Customers can visit the “Shop” page of the website to see all of the new and refurbished control boards available and buy them directly from the site.

“New software is not the only aspect we’re focusing on at Mountain Electronics,” George Brasington noted. “We can only be the industry leader if we offer the best repairs, so quality is where I’m placing my attention.”

“Most customers don’t realize that we do much more than repair what’s broken on their circuit boards,” he continued. “We completely remanufacture each control board we see. After washing each board thoroughly, all of the components that tend to fail on that style of board get removed, whether or not they’ve failed, and new parts are repopulated. Next, the boards go to the technicians who conduct the final diagnostics, rework and testing. This remanufacturing process not only fixes the problems, but also provides preventative maintenance to keep the boards working well beyond our one-year warranty.”

“I love seeing boards come back in that have a warranty sticker from the early 2000s, when I first began working here. It makes me feel good to know that the work I’m doing is keeping my customers’ machines running for many years. This year, I’ve been working to improve our repair quality even more by implementing stricter quality control



measures, improving the training programs for our technicians, and dedicating more time to research and development. Our goal is to reduce the percentage of warranty returns and unrepairable boards by 20 percent over the next two years. And I feel confident we can meet this goal.”

In April, the Brasingtons finally bought the 57,000-square-foot manufacturing facility Mountain Electronics had been leasing for the last five years, thus providing the company with more than



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enough room for long-term expansion.

And Mountain Electronics also is “expanding” in another important way – to the next generation, with daughter Adalaya Brasington, who was just 6 when her parents bought the company.

Growing up in the business, Adalaya has learned every aspect of the day-to-day operations – from mowing the grass when she was in middle school, to helping with shipping and receiving throughout high school, to soldering during the summers while in college. She is currently completing her business degree online at Oregon State University, while handling customer service (in English and Spanish) and marketing for the company. In recent months, she’s also played an integral role in creating a new company logo and branded marketing materials for the business, including Mountain Electronics’ booth design for the upcoming Clean Show.

The Brasingtons and the Mountain Electronics team are anxious to exhibit (Booth #2755) at this summer’s Clean Show in Atlanta. After the last few years, they’re no doubt excited to connect in person with long-time customers, as well as make connections with potential new ones.

What are you most excited about for Clean 2022?

Whitney Brasington: I’m excited about several things. For starters, this will be the first time we’ve exhibited at the Clean Show. We’ve attended for years, but never had a booth. We’ve been putting a lot of time and energy into creating a new logo and branded materials. So, I’m excited to display the updated logo and matching booth design. I always love connecting with our long-time customers at the show. Because we serve customers nationwide, we communicate with

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them over the phone and via email, but seeing them in person at the Clean Show gives us a way to put a face with a name and a voice. I can't wait to thank them in person. It'll also be a great way to connect with new potential customers and educate them on our repair process.

George Brasington: My favorite part of going to the Clean Show is watching our lead technician's eyes light up when he sees the new washer and dryer models. It's the perfect playground for him and our lead engineer to be inspired to continue research and development. Seeing the updated technology in the newest models of washers and dryers fuels their ingenuity to develop new test simulators for the next generation of control boards. We always try to stay ahead of the curve and be ready to diagnose, repair and test the new generation of control boards even before the manufacturers' warranties end.

What is one key to successful laundromat ownership today?

Whitney: We've never owned a laundromat ourselves, but we do talk to laundromat owners all day long. One thing I've noticed over the years is that our happiest customers are the ones who have spare control boards. Whenever a board fails in a machine, they just install the spare board while they send us the broken one to repair. They save money because they don't need expedited shipping or our rush service, and they minimize the downtime on their machine. Having a good spare on hand also means that they can do a "swap test" to confirm that the machine's problem is with the control board and not somewhere else in the machine.

What's the biggest reason for laundromat owners to be optimistic right now?

George: This may sound a bit self-serving; however, if I owned a



laundromat, knowing I could get a broken circuit board repaired for a fraction of the cost of buying a new board would make me feel optimistic - especially given today's prices and long lead times. We've had a lot of new customers find out about us in the past couple of years, since the shortage of replacement parts.

With regard to business, what are you most concerned about?

Whitney: I'm most concerned about the dramatic increase in costs lately. We try to keep our repair prices reasonable and have rarely increased our prices over the years. We offer free shipping, but shipping costs have skyrocketed. Even the cost of cardboard boxes keeps going up. Plus, the cost of parts has increased significantly in recent years as well - due to tariffs on goods from China, the microchip shortage and supply-chain issues. Also, wages have increased dramatically in the past year, and it's been a challenge to stay fully staffed and offer competitive compensation. In our 17 years of running this business, 2020 to 2022 have been the most challenging years we've experienced.



What is the most pronounced trend you're currently seeing in your industry?

George: Many of the major manufacturers use a single type of control board in hundreds of models of machines. In recent years, some manufacturers have taken this type of production to the next level. They are developing universal control boards, which can be used in a much wider variety of machines with different interfaces, including residential machines. The only difference in these boards is their programming.

Where do you see your niche of the laundromat industry headed?

Damien Woody: The technology of the laundry industry is constantly advancing. We're seeing state-of-the-art microprocessors that allow the use of graphical displays and touchscreens. The programming of these control boards is more complex, and wireless technology is becoming more common, especially with the various payment systems. Our research and development team constantly updates our repair processes to keep up with these trends.