



By Lacey Nadeau

## *El Segundo 5-Minute Express Carwash:*

*Watching success grow a mile a minute*

**I**t took six years to cut through the red tape and build El Segundo 5-Minute Express Carwash in El Segundo, Calif., but so far, the wash is proving worth the wait.

The success of the express wash has surprised its creators with the large number of customers that have been drawn to the wash in its first year. The tunnel is 200 feet long and features 185 feet of equipment from N/S Wash Systems, which owns the carwash. Though the wash is used to showcase the company's equipment to potential investors, it was not originally the team's primary goal, says Gary Avrech, advertising manager for N/S Wash.

"Our research showed that an exterior express carwash at the El Segundo site had the potential to be extremely popular and lucrative," he shares "Fortunately, this proved to be a very good business decision."

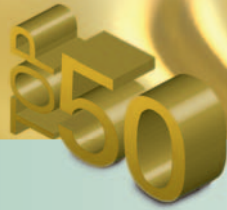
The original plan for El Segundo was to build a full-service wash tunnel, Avrech reports, but California passed strict employment laws affecting carwash operators, which led to the decision to build an express exterior. Such a design relies on fewer employees and thus reduces labor costs from about 40 percent to 10 percent of gross, Avrech explains.

"Surprisingly, it takes only two employees and a manager, at any one time, to operate the carwash and to process an average of 900 cars a day," Avrech reports of the express model, which translates into higher profits for the operator.

Those 900 cars are washed by N/S Wash's Lammscloth cleaning material, which Avrech says has been tested and proven to clean and protect "better than any other vehicle wash material available." He also says the material is designed to process as many as 250 cars per hour.

The success of El Segundo is due in part to the traffic count of the site. Located on Sepulveda Boulevard, just south of LAX airport, the carwash is passed by more than 90,000 cars, taxis, limos and shuttle vans each day. The large signage with LED reader boards helps attract the attention of those passersby, Avrech contends. The carwash is also right next to a group of office buildings where





more than 70,000 workers are employed. But with the growing popularity of express exteriors across the country, El Segundo's success can be linked to more than just location.

The wash offers its customers the option of a quick wash for \$5, or two other upgrades – one at \$8 and one at \$10. At the tunnel's exit, El Segundo offers free vacuums, the express exterior model's signature. In fact, the wash offers 26 vacuum stations. And of course there's the "5-Minute" part of the name, which tells customers they'll be saving time. At this point, says Avrech, there is no money-back guarantee if the process were to take more than five minutes, but it is strongly being considered.

El Segundo's promotional efforts include a comprehensive local advertising campaign that uses area newspapers and mailings to deliver full-color print advertisements every week. Colored ads also

reach those nearby office buildings' employees, as well as any employees within a two-mile radius of the wash, Avrech says. The wash also works with nonprofit organizations to develop fund-raisers that attract new customers to the carwash.

Avrech says the value of the express exterior model is invaluable to consumers, in terms of time and cost savings, and that it's very profitable for carwash operators, too. "The El Segundo 5-Minute Express Carwash experiment has proven that the West Coast is ready for the express exterior wash platform, and that it will continue to grow and to thrive well into the future," he predicts. "Consider how Starbucks revolutionized the hot beverage industry when compared to the traditional coffee shop, and it's easy to see how the express exterior wash platform will likely encounter a similar growth trajectory."

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