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A Pipeline **TO PROFIT**

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Speedrooter XL[®]



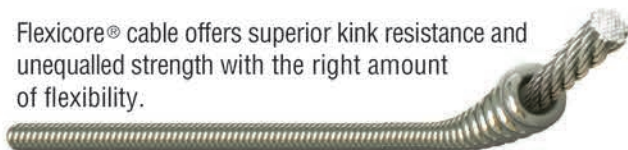
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▼ When Dave Conte visits supply houses, other contractors sometimes kid him about his meticulously organized service truck, featuring pull-out shelving by WEATHER GUARD. But for Conte, the owner and sole employee at Conte Plumbing in Petaluma, California, being efficient is no laughing matter — it's the key to running a profitable business.



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On the ROAD

Organization Man

California plumber's customized pickup provides a place for everything.

By Ken Wysocky



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Technician Roger Moore is a member of the award-winning Mr. Rooter of Mid-Michigan team.

Photography by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch

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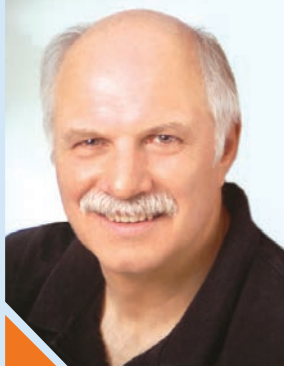


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It helps to have teammates. That's the headline on Ed Wodalski's last column, and it's true in every aspect of life. Ed was a good teammate. Sadly, he passed away Sept. 21 at the age of 64.

Ed came home on a Wednesday evening after officiating a high school football game, talked to his wife and sat down to rest. He died of a massive heart attack a short while later.

Appropriately, his final column talks about baseball and one of his grandkids. He loved baseball, and his grandkids were his world. He also really enjoyed putting this publication together for you, and this column ends his run in fine fashion.

Ed Wodalski was a good teammate. He will be missed.

It Helps to Have Teammates

Like baseball, being a franchise member provides an opportunity to share with others *By Ed Wodalski*

T

his summer I had the privilege of helping coach my grandson Eli's baseball team. Getting 13 wiggly, easily distracted 6- and 7-year-olds to hit, catch and throw can be a challenge.

In Rookie League, teams use pneumatic pitching machines. Opposing coaches place the ball in a tube-like barrel, triggering a light that blinks three times before launching the ball. Occasionally the machine misfires, and instead of a "whoosh" there's a wimpy "poof," which brings giggles from the bench.

As a Lugnut, everyone bats and takes turns at positions in the field.

Being a team member means running to the ball and helping others make a play.

In many ways, plumbing franchises are like teams, each member ready to assist the other.

Brad and Amanda Sims, the subject of this month's profile and the 2015 Mr. Rooter Franchisee of the Year, say one of the biggest benefits of being a franchise member is the support you receive.

"There's always someone out there who has either been down the same road you're on or is currently on the same road," Amanda says. "You always have someone you can network with and bounce ideas off of. That's one of the best things we've received out of the franchise system — being able to spend time with other people doing the same thing we are and actually talk about it. You can't do that with your competition."

When the Sims started with Mr. Rooter they were assigned a franchise consultant who coached them in the Mr. Rooter methodology, and remains in contact today.

"We talk at least on a monthly basis and sometimes more than that," Amanda says. "There's a site visit every year and then at conferences we always spend a little time together. They're always there if you're having an issue or need help finding training opportunities."


In plumbing, like baseball, there's much to be gained from your peers. A good teammate will always pick you up. Maybe you need advice on a new service you're launching, or maybe you're playing third with a runner on second base.

Run to the bag!

Obediently, Edward hurries to third, leaving the ball behind — still rolling on the ground.

Like baseball, Mr. Rooter offers various training opportunities where owners and employees of franchisees can come together to continue their education. A business can travel offsite for a seminar or bring the training to them. The Sims hosted their first such three-day seminar in September.

"It was focused on the technicians, but also the owners to teach them how to go back and train their own people," Amanda says. Since joining the Mr. Rooter team, the Sims have gone from making just shy of \$200,000 a year to \$1.6 million in 2015 — growth they attribute to coaching and support from Mr. Rooter.

As for the Lugnuts, they too had a good year, and I sincerely thank them for the autographed team ball. I'll treasure it always. 

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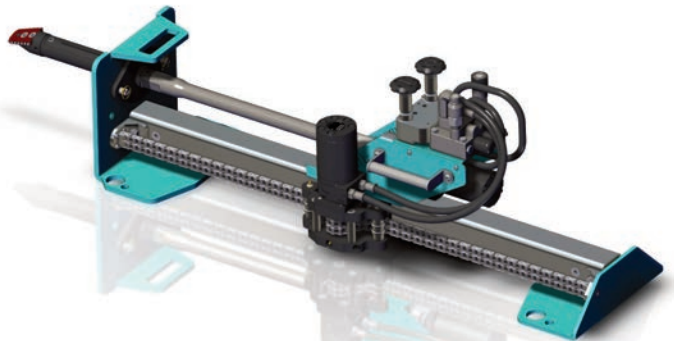
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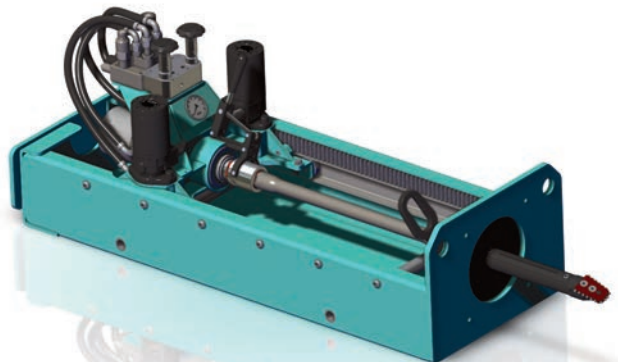
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MAKING THE CONNECTION

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Different PEX Fittings

From expense to durability, PEX pipe carries several benefits that make it the preferred option for some plumbers. But there aren't benefits without proper installation. Imagine having an already small margin in order to win a project, only to have that margin eaten up by a callback. There are four main methods for joining PEX systems and understanding the pros and cons of each will help you choose the most reliable option for your project. plumbermag.com/featured



OVERHEARD ONLINE

"We always say it's like a set of tires on a car. A teenager can ruin a set of tires in one night, just as an operator who improperly uses a hose can tear one up in just a day."

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THE NEXT BIG THING

What Will Be the Future Trends in the Plumbing World?

Pondering this question led regular *Plumber* contributor Anja Smith down, as she puts it, "a serious internet rabbit hole." Plumbing and sanitation are often cited as a leading contender for greatest invention of all time, so the bar is set pretty high for further innovations. Looking at areas such as style, efficiency, and materials/tools, Smith shares her thoughts on what the future might hold.

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NO NEED TO PANIC

California Plumbers Save the Day for 30-Floor Hotel

When Juan Gonzalez, service manager at BPI Plumbing in Chula Vista, California, received a 2 a.m. call from the manager of a large hotel, he heard panic in the man's voice. A broken 6-inch main had spewed sewage over the employee locker room, and the booked 30-floor facility had to address the situation quickly or shut down. Gonzalez not only effectively calmed down the hotel manager, he and his team were able to handle the problem in a way that kept the hotel in operation. plumbermag.com/featured



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Judy Kneiszel

You've Been Hacked!

Follow these tips to protect you and your contacts *By Judy Kneiszel*

A few weeks ago, I received a frantic email from a friend who works for a real estate company. I had seen her only two days prior and she, who generally shares a lot of personal information, never mentioned an upcoming international trip. But her email to me said she was in Greece, where she had been robbed outside of her hotel and needed my help and money to get home.

The truth is she never left town, and her email account was hacked.

Having personal email hacked is inconvenient. But when you're running a plumbing business it's worse. For starters, you have a lot more contacts. Receiving a spam email could anger customers who have trusted you with their email addresses, and email hacking can also be a prelude to identity theft. Unfortunately, small businesses are the most vulnerable to email hacking because it's likely your email account contains more information than an individual account but has less security than a large corporation's email accounts.

▲ HOW THE HACK DID THIS HAPPEN?

Your email account may become vulnerable if:

- 1) You don't have up-to-date security software installed
- 2) You have weak passwords
- 3) You've clicked on a malicious link in an email or instant message, on a social networking site, or on a webpage
- 4) You've downloaded a corrupt video, game, song or attachment

▲ WHAT TO DO IF YOUR EMAIL GETS HACKED

If a contact calls and asks if you've really been mugged in a foreign country, assume you've been hacked and take action immediately.

First, review your email settings. Make sure the hacker hasn't added malicious links to your signature or set up any automatic forwarding. If these changes go undetected,

every time you send out a new email, you are exacerbating the problem.

Once you've confirmed your settings, run updated antivirus software to make sure your mail account is clean. Then get ahead of any bad publicity the fraudulent emails might cause for your company. Send an email message to everyone on your contacts list telling them to be on the lookout for strange emails from you and warning them not to click on any links or attachments in emails that appear to have been sent from you. Use "BCC" (blind carbon copy) rather than "To" or "CC" on this email so you don't provide everyone on your contacts list with a list of your customers' email addresses.

Once you've cleaned up your computer and mail settings and notified your contacts, the problem may be over. But not necessarily. Always assume a hacker got away with some private information and be on alert. Monitor your credit for a while. You can even contact one of the credit reporting agencies and put a temporary fraud alert in your credit file if you are really worried.

You'll also want to report that you were hacked to your email service provider and change your password and security questions. If access to your account is blocked, your provider can help. There will be steps to follow on their site's help center for creating new passwords. You'll also want to change your password on any site that uses the same one as your email.

Remember that if you've been hacked, you should wait to change your password until after your antivirus and anti-malware programs are updated. If you change your password first, the hackers may collect your new password as well as your old one.

▲ AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

To protect your email from being hacked again, get into a routine of changing your passwords frequently and make

passwords as secure as possible.

The best passwords aren't necessarily difficult to remember, they are just difficult to guess. Don't use "123456," which CBS News reported to be the most common password used in 2013. And don't make your password, "password." That was No. 2.

Here are some tips for creating a strong password:

Create a password that's at least 10 characters and include capital letters, lowercase letters, numbers and symbols.

Do not use your name or the name of a spouse, child or pet. Don't use your birthday, anniversary or city name.

Do not use words that can be found in a dictionary, spelled forward or backward.

One way to set a password that's easier to remember than random letters and numbers but difficult to guess is to use text messaging shortcuts. For example L8r2DayG8r! translates to "later today gator!" and l00kb4ulEEp? translates to "Look before you leap?"

Another key to preventing hacking is to be smart about spam and scams. If an offer in an email sounds too good (or bad) to be true, it almost always is. You did not win any foreign sweepstakes or lottery. No one needs your help getting out of a foreign country. There's no miracle cure for anything available by clicking a link in an email or on a website. Your friends aren't really sending you those emails with nothing but "Look at this!" or "Check this out!" in the subject line and nothing but a link in the message.

Those are obvious scams, but what if an email appears to be from your internet service provider, your bank, your credit card company, or some other legitimate company you've done business with? If they are asking you to click on something or provide information, look closer. No reputable bank or company is ever going to ask you to authenticate or verify information online.

If an email of this type slips through your spam filter and you think it's legitimate, don't click on any links. Rather, use a search engine to find the company's website, and then log in or call the customer service number. If the email is legitimate, they'll confirm it. If it is fraudulent, they'll appreciate knowing about it.

▲ CALL FOR HELP

And finally, if you are ever mugged outside your hotel in a foreign country and need help, borrow some change from a local and call the American embassy. ■

Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for about 20 years and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.



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Ready Reference

Franchise membership provides nationwide network of problem-solving support

By Marian Bond

John Mott II is president of Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Drain in Sciotoville, Ohio, part of John Mott Enterprises that includes Mott's Potts (portable restrooms and septic service) and John Mott Excavation. A Roto-Rooter franchisee since 1972, services include drain cleaning, plumbing, jetting, CCTV and pipe bursting.

About half the company's work is residential with the remainder divided among commercial and municipal. It also serves as a subcontractor to other plumbing companies in the region.

Q: What are some of the advantages of being a Roto-Rooter franchisee?

A: I would say national recognition, the advertising. Being able to network with other dealerships from all over the country about problems they have faced and how they have come up with solutions.

My father (the late John Mott) liked being able to talk with others in the business who were not competitors.

One thing that stands out to me is the training they offer to deal with flooded basements from heavy rain or a city main backup.

There are a lot of good people in the franchise — a lot of knowledge.

Q: Considering the three companies in your corporation, what percent of the business is driven by Roto-Rooter, and how does this benefit your other services?

A: I would say 60 percent of our business is from Roto-Rooter calls for sewer and drain cleaning. When we get a call for a stopped-up drain and we go out to cable the line and pull mud back with the cutter, we know we will have a broken line. Then we send in our camera, and this will likely give us an opportunity to bring business to our excavation company and replace the line, or we might do pipe bursting.

Q: When the economy is fluctuating, how has the Roto-Rooter name impacted your business?

A: We don't see a lot of change in the drain cleaning portion of our business when the economy is down. This is a stable part of the services we provide — so a definite benefit.

Q: Have you considered adding another Roto-Rooter franchisee?

A: I'm pretty satisfied right now, but if I knew I could find trained people I might consider expanding. I have thought about it off and on over the years. But you have to be able to take care of people when they call for service, and that takes technicians. There are no training opportunities at this time and it is a challenge to find personnel.

Q: Who are your team members and what duties do they perform?

A: We have two full-time drain cleaners and three plumbers. Our technicians are cross-trained so they are capable of working across the line. We have three service vans and



“I would say 60 percent of our business is from Roto-Rooter calls for sewer and drain cleaning.”

John Mott II

they are all equipped for drain cleaning, and also for plumbing with tools and supplies — cable machines and different parts. We have a trailer jetter that is an important tool for us, and cameras.

Q: Are you a licensed plumber, and do your employees work under your license?

A: I have a state plumbing license and my employees work under that license.

Q: What do you enjoy about being a plumber?

A: I am in the field probably 50 percent of the time, and what I enjoy most would be those projects that are a little more substantive, that amounts to more than a typical service call. In our area they are putting in sewers to replace septic systems. The old treatment systems have to be removed and hooked up to the new city or county sewer.

Depending on the size of the treatment plant it can be a two- or three-week job. Four men would be on this kind of job. For a residential switch, it would typically be a one-day thing and have two men.

The treatment plant work takes longer to do, costs more to do, and you have to wait longer on the money. But it is good to do something different from time to time.

Q: How have you used the Roto-Rooter name to promote your business?

A: One thing we have used successfully is a 2008 Chevrolet Kodiak C 4500 with a pickup truck box. It looks like a giant pickup. We use magnetic Roto-Rooter decals and attend local car shows. It's a big truck, and we have recently added to the program by using a bag from Roto-Rooter containing a roll of toilet paper, along with a coupon and description of our many services as a handout.

Q: How else have you benefited from the Roto-Rooter name?

A: One way I have found the Roto-Rooter name to be an asset is when a large company comes into our area and needs some kind of work they will call us first. They recognize that name. **PI**

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A Pipeline TO PROFIT

Mr. Rooter Franchisee of the Year relies on support network to achieve business success

By Kyle Rogers | Photos by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch



Mr. Rooter of Mid-Michigan, Mount Pleasant, Michigan

OWNERS	Brad and Amanda Sims
FOUNDED	2007
EMPLOYEES	13
SERVICES	Plumbing repair and installation, drain cleaning, sewer line replacement
SERVICE AREA	11 counties in central Michigan
WEBSITE	www.mrrooter.com/mid-michigan



▶ Chace Bininecki (left) and Brad Sims finish a commercial drain cleaning job using the Easy-Kleen Groundhog Jetter.

O

n their own, Brad and Amanda Sims operated a small drain cleaning business covering a single county in central Michigan and making just shy of \$200,000 a year. As part of the Mr. Rooter family, they've grown their business considerably. In 2015, the workload in an expansive 11-county service area brought in \$1.6 million of revenue and led to the company being named Mr. Rooter's Franchisee of the Year.

It wasn't the first time the company has received such an honor. In 2014, Amanda was named Mr. Rooter's Woman of the Year, and in its first year as part of the franchise the business was Rookie of the Year. The honors signify the company's dedication to the Mr. Rooter system, which the Sims say is a big reason for their success.

"Mr. Rooter wants you to succeed, so they're willing to help you in whatever way they can," Brad says.

"We followed the system and did our best to not recreate the wheel," Amanda adds. "Simply doing that has helped us improve where we were in our lives and the business."

THE EARLY YEARS

In the late 1990s, Brad worked for a Mr. Rooter franchisee in the Detroit area. That experience left a good impression on him. When he was running his own business, Brad's Drain Cleaning Inc., a few years later and visited the Mr. Rooter booth at the Pumper & Cleaner Expo (now WWETT Show), it didn't take long for him to decide to go the franchise route.

"I always thought it was a good concept and seemed to be really smoothly run," Brad says. "All the technicians were clean and well dressed. It just looked like something you could do really well with. We started talking to them, one thing led to another, and a couple years later we were signed up under Mr. Rooter."

As Brad's Drain Cleaning from 2003 to 2007, the business was a one-truck operation that specialized in only drain cleaning for Mecosta County and did about \$180,000 in annual revenue. During the first year as a Mr. Rooter franchisee, the company expanded its plumbing services beyond just drain cleaning and did twice that amount in revenue. The growth continued from there. The company now has 13 employees and eight vans on the road daily in an

▶ Mr. Rooter of Mid-Michigan's fleet includes eight GMC vans each equipped with a jetter, inspection camera and a pair of Spartan drain cleaning machines.



11-county service area that encompasses most of central Michigan. The best single year revenue-wise has been \$1.7 million.

“There is no way we could have grown like that without the Mr. Rooter name,” Brad says. “Everyone knows it and they just flock to it.”

THE BENEFITS OF FRANCHISING

The nationwide marketing power of Mr. Rooter has helped, but it’s the other types of support the company has received through the franchise system that have really aided the growth, Brad says.

“When I was Brad’s Drain Cleaning, I was pretty much tapped out,” he says. “I could do the work really well, but the business side was totally new to me. I had no idea how to go about it. I didn’t come from a business background and none of my family had either. With Mr. Rooter, I just started running what they already knew, and they knew a lot. And I also started talking to a lot of other Mr. Rooter franchisees. They had a lot of information and were very willing to help.”

Amanda says the most valuable part of being involved in a franchise system is those networking opportunities with fellow Mr. Rooter businesses.

“There’s always someone out there who has either been down the same road you’re on or is currently on the same road. You always have someone you can network with and bounce ideas off of.”

Amanda Sims

“There’s always someone out there who has either been down the same road you’re on or is currently on the same road. You always have someone you can network with and bounce ideas off of,” she says. “That’s one of the best things we’ve received out of the franchise system — being able to spend time with other people doing the same thing we are and actually talk about it. You can’t do that with your competition.”

The Sims attend regional and national conferences where they meet other members of the Mr. Rooter family, who remain just a phone call away. The Sims did exactly that when they needed to hire a new master plumber.

Continued ▶



▶ Mr. Rooter of Mid-Michigan team members include (kneeling, from left) Amanda Sims, Angelina Reniff, Piper Glossip and Brad Sims. Standing (center row, from left) are Brandi Earl, Arianna Sims, Chace Biniecki, Aaron Rogers, Molly LaBelle, Jennifer Whiting and Lucas Walton. Pictured in the back row (from left) are Roger Moore, Dan Biniecki, Robert Jameson, Alain Shannon, James Small, Scott Breedlove and Les Butler.



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Unsure how to begin, they reached out to their fellow franchisees and ended up receiving good advice from a Mr. Rooter out of Pennsylvania.

“He pointed me in the right direction and told me pretty much how to do it,” Amanda says.

TRAINING THE MR. ROOTER WAY

In addition to the substantial support system, Amanda says being a Mr. Rooter franchisee is largely about training. From how the office staff answers the phone to how technicians enter a customer’s home, there’s a system in place.

“When we bring a new person on board, if they’re a technician then they’re training with another technician. If they’re office staff, they train in the office,” Amanda says. “We train them until they’re comfortable being on their own. We spend a lot of time in the very beginning just working with them on how to follow our systems. I do a lot of flowcharts and they get a binder with all that information and everything else they need to know.”

When the Sims started with Mr. Rooter they were assigned a franchise consultant who coached them in the Mr. Rooter methodology. That remains available to them to this day.

“We talk at least on a monthly basis and sometimes more than that,” Amanda says. “There’s a site visit every year and then at conferences we always spend a little time together. They’re always there if you’re having an issue or need help finding training opportunities.”

Mr. Rooter supports various training seminars where owners and employees of franchisees can come together to continue their education. A business can travel offsite for a seminar or bring the training to them. The Sims hosted their first such three-day seminar in September.

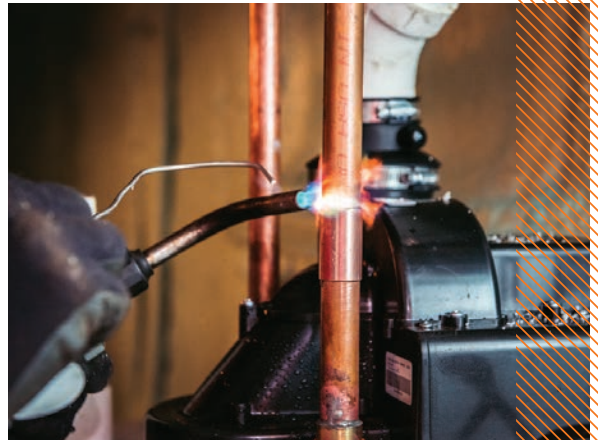
“It was called Advanced Customer Experience training,” Amanda says. “It was focused on the technicians, but also the owners to teach them how to go back and train their own people. And then on the last day we did training on the latest software we’re using. A lot of the training is about creating a good customer experience.”

The Sims say they would encourage anyone to go the franchise route.



▲ Dan Biniacki installs a toilet at a residence in Hersey, Michigan.

▼ Mr. Rooter of Mid-Michigan technician Roger Moore solders pipe for a water heater.



Continued ▶

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▼ Office manager Brandi Earl uses ServiceTitan software to dispatch technicians in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.



Executing the Mr. Rooter model

When Brad and Amanda Sims were operating as Brad's Drain Cleaning a decade ago, they charged between \$125 and \$150 to clean a line. Now, as a Mr. Rooter franchisee, they charge between \$250 and \$300 for the same job. There's no big secret to the change in pricing strategy. Under Mr. Rooter, they just finally learned the right way to price services, Brad says.

"We actually know what we need to be at to be profitable," he says. "Before we were a franchisee, we just kind of guessed at what we should be at. We had no idea how to properly calculate it. Mr. Rooter actually has a price calculator. You put your costs in and it tells you what you need to have price-wise. It's not a huge profit, it's more moderate, but it shows you how to best calculate those numbers. If you're losing money on a certain task, it also shows you if you're underpriced for your area."

Pricing is among the operational changes that have benefited the company since making the move to a franchise system. Before joining Mr. Rooter, the Sims relied on QuickBooks and paper and pencil. Now they use ServiceTitan software to better organize their scheduling and bookkeeping. As Brad's Drain Cleaning, they didn't give much thought to how the

phone was answered. Under Mr. Rooter they've been trained on a different approach for that first customer contact.

"Before, we just answered the phone with the name of our company, got their information, and hung up," Amanda says. "Mr. Rooter helped us improve those soft skills so when we answer the phone we can try to be more empathetic about the situation, make the customer feel better, and set up some expectations for them about what's going to happen when a technician comes out."

When a technician arrives, there's a 14-step approach centered on creating a good experience for the customer.

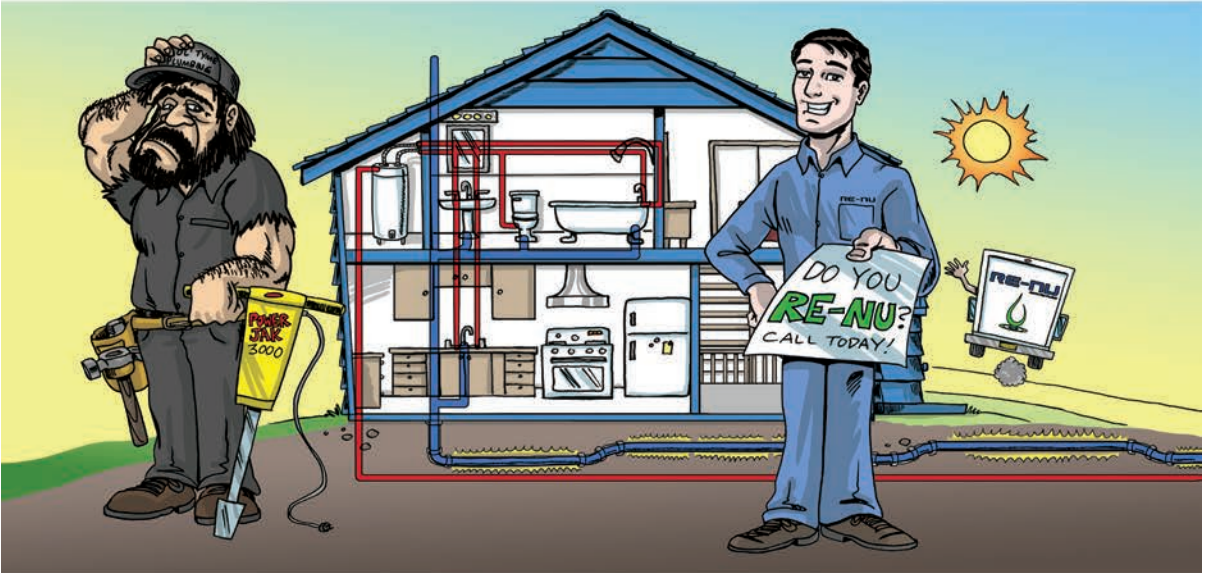
"It's all about working your way into actually doing the work," Amanda says. "We don't charge anything to come out. We come out, assess the situation, and then give the customer a price before we do any work. That way we're able to look at the situation, see what's going on, and be professional about it rather than just giving them some price over the phone that may not end up being right."

Not long into their tenure as a franchisee, the recession hit. Amanda says it helped to have the Mr. Rooter model in place.

"It gave us something to hold on to," she says. "We had a system and we knew if we followed the system we'd be OK."

Continued

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Adds Amanda, “I would suggest investigating your franchise first to make sure it’s going to benefit you. If you’re not aligned with the values and the systems they have, then it’s not going to work. But if you are aligned, there’s a definite benefit.”

CHALLENGES REMAIN

Although Mr. Rooter’s time-tested systems have ensured success for the Sims, there have still been challenges to overcome. One is finding qualified plumbing technicians.

“We now have eight vans on the road on a daily basis and could probably do more, but you need a trained technician in the van,” Brad says. “It’s not easy

finding good, qualified people who want to work in the trades.”

That’s why the company doesn’t always rely on experience when making a new hire. Amanda says taking precedence is a simple desire to work with your hands and a personality that is at least somewhat outgoing. From there, training can fill in any experience gaps.

“The experience is kind of an added bonus,” she says. “And we’re a family-oriented business, so if you have a family, we look for that too. We know that if you have a family, you’re probably going to have values in line with what we are looking for.”

Another top challenge is specific to the company’s central Michigan service area. Because the territory is so expansive, technicians often have lengthy drives between jobs. Compounding the problem is only three

Continued ▶

“ I would suggest investigating your franchise first to make sure it’s going to benefit you. If you’re not aligned with the values and the systems they have, then it’s not going to work. But if you are aligned, there’s a definite benefit.”

Amanda Sims



▶ Technician Dan Biniecki (right) uses a RIDGID SeeSnake CST0 to video inspect a pipe as Brad Sims (left) watches the monitor at a Rite-Aid in Big Rapids, Michigan.

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counties in the 11-county area have supply warehouses. The solution is to keep the vans as well stocked as possible.

“Other companies in a big city area may only have to drive 10 or 15 minutes to the next job. Most of our drivers are taking 30 to 45 minutes, if not two hours, to get to the next job,” Amanda says. “It really enforces that the guys have everything they need with them.”

“We can probably do about 90 percent of what we need to do at a house with what we keep in stock on the vans,” Brad adds.

The company maintains a fleet of eight GMC vans. Each van contains a jetter (Easy-Kleen), an inspection camera (mostly RIDGID and Hathorn), two types



▲ Chace Biniiecki removes a kitchen faucet on a residential job. When not in school, he learns the trade from his father, Dan Biniiecki.

“About the only thing we don't keep on the vans are toilets and faucets because there are too many different options for the customer.”

Brad Sims

of Spartan drain cleaning machines, a variety of different pipe and fittings, an array of hand tools, and various other items that may be needed like sump pumps, toilet floats and check valves.

Gauging what equipment and materials to keep on the vans has been a trial-and-error process, Brad says. Over the years the company has determined what is most often used for its service area, although there are still times when a job can't be completed on a single visit.

“It's hit and miss, but we try to stock what we use on a daily basis,” he says. “About the only thing we don't keep on the vans are toilets and faucets because there are too many different options for the customer.”

In that situation, someone at the home office in Mount Pleasant will deliver what is needed if the technician is in an area without a supply warehouse. Otherwise an appointment for the next day is set up for the customer.

THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, the Sims have a fairly precise plan for their plumbing business. In 12 years they're going to call it quits and move on to a new endeavor. They're going to invest in some real estate, something they've already started doing with a laundromat and a few storage units. Again, they point to the franchise system as the reason they're able to devise such a long-term master plan. Would they be in a similar position had they continued as Brad's Drain Cleaning?

“Not to the extent we are now,” Amanda says.

“We'll just keep applying the Mr. Rooter system,” Brad adds. “That will help us do what we need to do.”

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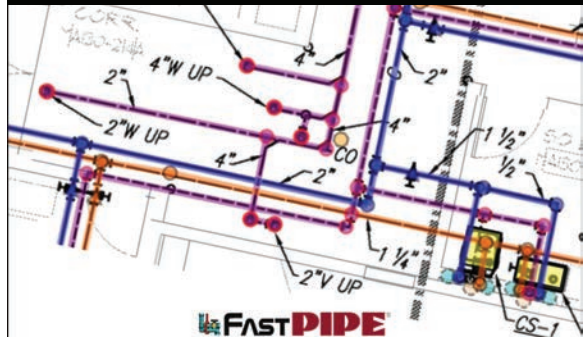


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Organization Man

California plumber's customized pickup provides a place for everything *By Ken Wysocky*

When Dave Conte visits supply houses, other contractors sometimes kid him about his meticulously organized service truck. But for Conte, the owner and sole employee at Conte Plumbing in Petaluma, California, being efficient is no laughing matter — it's the key to running a profitable business.

"I've always been big on organization," says Conte, who established his business in 1993.

He primarily performs residential service work in and around Petaluma, a city of about 60,000 located in Sonoma County, north of San Francisco.

"People generally are pretty amazed when they see my truck or walk into my garage (which serves as his shop).

"If you're organized, you know where things are and

how many parts and fittings and so forth you have in stock ... so you know what needs restocking," he says. "The ability to work faster and more efficiently saves time, and time is money. In addition, it saves on the cost of rotation of materials. When you don't know what you have in stock, you keep buying more for no good reason ... and in the meantime, those parts you can't find are getting scratched and tarnished, so you're losing money there, too."

Conte's 1990 Ford F-250 pickup truck, which he purchased used in 1996 with about 30,000 miles on it, is outfitted with a utility body made by Knapheide Manufacturing Co. and a custom-fabricated pipe-and-ladder rack. The truck has over 100,000 miles on the odometer and Conte is aiming for another 100,000 miles



Petaluma, CA

- COMPANY** Conte Plumbing
- LOCATION** Petaluma, California
- OWNER** Dave Conte
- VEHICLE** 1990 Ford F-250 with a Knapheide utility body
- BENEFITS** Efficient, productivity-enhancing storage; 20-foot-long pipe capacity; flexibility to carry everything from parts and tools to bulkier items like drain cleaning machines and water heaters or remodeling debris
- COST** About \$18,000 (for truck, utility bed, pipe rack and storage accessories)
- WEBSITE** www.conteplumbing.com





- ▲ Storage compartments, accessible from the outside, make it easy to grab parts and tools.
- ▶ Pull-out shelving made by WEATHER GUARD.



before he even thinks about getting another vehicle.

Why a pickup truck with a utility body instead of a van or box truck? Conte sums it up with one word: versatility. Conte does everything from drain cleaning and plumbing repairs to underground work and remodeling — even the occasional new-home installation — and a pickup provides the flexibility to do many things with one vehicle.

“When I’m doing underground work, for example, I can remove some materials (from the utility body’s open central compartment) and carry, say, a yard of sand,” he says. “Or if I’m doing new construction, I can load up barrels full of ABS drain fittings, or haul debris from remodeling jobs. If I have a drain cleaning job, I can load a drain machine in the back, too.”

Conte uses drain cleaning equipment made by RIDGID and General Pipe Cleaners, a Vivax-Metrotech vCam Mini pipeline inspection camera, and power tools made by RIDGID and Milwaukee Electric Tool. He also carries a PowerMate stair climber hand truck from L P International to load/unload and carry heavy, bulky items like water heaters or drain cleaning machines.



- ▶ Dave Conte’s 1990 Ford F-250 with over 100,000 miles on the odometer features a Knapheide utility body and custom-fabricated pipe-and-ladder rack.

“If you’re organized, you know where things are and how many parts and fittings and so forth you have in stock ... so you know what needs restocking.”

Dave Conte

Another advantage the truck offers: Conte says he can buy pipe in 20-foot lengths, quickly load them atop the pipe rack, secure them with ratchet tie-down straps and drive away, as opposed to waiting for someone at a supply house to cut them down to size to fit inside a van or box truck.



▲ Dividers inside drawers keep parts organized by size and type.

Over the years, Conte made mental notes about the effective storage methods and accessories he saw on other trucks, both those owned by companies where he used to work or those owned by fellow contractors he'd meet at supply houses. As such, his truck is a poster child for efficiency, with seemingly every inch devoted to storing parts, tools and other supplies and equipment.

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Key components include the pipe rack, which features a metal basket that holds long, narrow tools such as shovels, meter wrenches and digging bars; and hooks that hold everything from coiled tubing to electrical extension cords. Other features include a pipe vise mounted on the rear bumper; homemade wooden boxes for storing ABS fittings; and a rear-mounted, pull-out shelving unit made by WEATHER GUARD, a Werner Co. brand.

"The WEATHER GUARD unit is very convenient," Conte says. "You open a drawer and can see all the contents at a glance. It's like pulling out a drawer in a kitchen: Boom — there are the knives, there are the forks and there are the spoons."

The Knapheide body's storage compartments, which are accessible from the outside, make it quick and easy to grab parts and tools.

"I love it that I don't have to climb up into the vehicle to get things," he says. "All the doors are on the outside, so you just open them up, flip up the lids and see everything right away."

Conte keeps power and hand tools and his toolbox on the driver's side, because they're the first things he grabs, and stores repair parts in the passenger-side compartments. Dividers inside drawers keep parts organized by size and type. Moreover, to minimize time-consuming runs to supply houses, he keeps a running list of materials and parts he needs to replenish.

In a storage cabinet toward the rear of the truck's passenger side, Conte keeps a RIDGID 600 hand-held power threader and other cutting and threading tools.

"That way everything I need for threading and cutting iron pipe for gas work is right there at that back corner," he says.

The pickup truck cost about \$13,000, and Conte estimates he's invested approximately another \$5,000 for the utility bed, the custom pipe rack and pipe vice and storage accessories.

"Over time, I really maxed out the storage space," he says, noting how he's refined his plan over the years. "Space is a valuable commodity on service trucks, especially if you're a one-man operation working out of a garage."

Looking ahead, Conte says he has no plans to buy a bigger truck, noting that he'd only have to customize it again to suit his needs, plus the Ford truck has been very durable. As such, he's happy to keep driving the recently overhauled truck while continuing his one-man quest for optimal organization — even if it means getting a little ribbing from other plumbers along the way. **PI**

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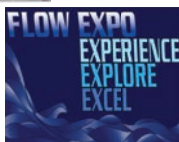
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Should You Run Ethanol in Your Small Engine?

Blended gasoline gets a bad rap for fouling fuel systems. But is the criticism justified? *By Ed Wodalski*

Would you? Could you? Should you use ethanol-blended, oxygenated fuel in your small engine?

The short answer is yes, but ...

Today's spark-ignited, carbureted engines used in pumps, generators, drain cleaners, power washers and similar equipment are designed to run on E0 (100 percent gasoline) to E10 (10 percent ethanol, 90 percent gasoline) fuels.

The devil, as they say, is in the details. Even ethanol-free fuels can be harmful to your small engine if not stored properly.

DON'T BLAME THE FUEL

"A lot of things get blamed on ethanol, but it's not really ethanol's fault," says Mike Rickey, senior manager, Honda engines.

Fuel naturally degrades and becomes stale over time. Running an engine on stale fuel is the leading cause of carburetor failure. Stale fuel also leaves gum and varnish on piston rings that can cause engine failure. Stale fuel, however, has been a problem long before blended gasoline.

"Fuel can get stale in 30 to 60 days," Rickey says. "We recommend people only buy enough gasoline to last one to two months and add a fuel stabilizer to the storage container, even if you're going to use it fairly quickly."

A word of warning: While stabilizer extends the shelf life of gasoline, it doesn't "refresh" or reconstitute stale fuel.

Two natural enemies of blended fuels are air and water, which quickly break down improperly stored gasoline.

Honda recommends storing gasoline in an approved clean, plastic, sealed container. Make sure the vent, if equipped, is closed to prevent air and moisture from entering, and keep stored fuel in a cool location away from direct sunlight.

"Ethanol, as it hydrates, gets more aggressive toward metal components," says Martin Radue, senior staff production engineer for Kohler engines. "That's going to drive more corrosion in the fuel system."

SHAKE BEFORE FILLING

Given the opportunity, each gallon of ethanol-blended fuel absorbs about 3/4 ounce of water. Upon reaching a saturation point, it begins to separate. Since ethanol and water are heavier than gasoline, the mixture drops to the bottom of the storage container.

To ensure your fuel is properly mixed, it's a good idea to shake the container for 30 seconds before refilling your engine, says outdoor power equipment maker ECHO.

NOTHING ABOVE E10

Never run E15 or higher blends of fuel in your small engine. In addition to being prohibited by federal law, the carburetor in your small engine isn't tuned to run on fuel containing more than 10 percent ethanol.

"Carburetors, as a general rule, have a 10 percent window for tuning, based on emission standards," Rickey says. "When you tune a carburetor for using

Continued ▶



▲ Never run anything above an E10 fuel in your small engine.

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▲ Stabilizer products can extend the shelf life of stored fuel, but they don't refresh stale gasoline.

▶ To help ensure you choose the correct fuel for your small engine, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) launched a "Look Before You Pump" campaign, placing red warning labels on pumps and equipment.

▶ Gasoline should be stored in an approved, sealed, plastic container in a cool location away from direct sunlight. It's also a good practice to keep the container full to prevent the gasoline from absorbing air and water, add a fuel stabilizer and shake the container for at least 30 seconds to ensure a proper mixture before filling your engine.

certain kinds of fuels, from E0 to E10 is 10 percent and E5 to E15 is another 10 percent."

Could engines be made to run on E15 or E20 fuel? Certainly, he says.

"An engine can be designed to run on pretty much anything. If we wanted engines to run on E85, that absolutely could be designed. But the applicability of engines today is E10 or less."

Rickey says as long as consumers follow good maintenance and storage practices, blended fuels shouldn't be a problem, even for equipment built 10 years ago.

LOOK BEFORE YOU PUMP

That said, as more fuels are introduced to the market, service stations have begun installing pumps capable of dispensing E10, as well as E15, E30 and E85 gasoline. To help ensure you select the correct fuel for your small engine, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute launched a "Look Before You Pump" campaign, placing red warning labels on pumps and equipment.

But even that might not be enough. Pumps dispensing

multiple blends from the same system can cause contamination. The problem increases when filling small containers. For example, according to a 2010 technical statement issued by the Engine Manufacturers Association, pumps retain 0.2 gallons of residual fuel. If the previous customer selected E85, the fuel in your 1-gallon container might actually contain a 25 percent ethanol blend (E25) instead of the desired E10.

"What we recommend to people with Crust Busters is they try to find non-oxygenated gas," says Pete Schmitz, a partner for the septic tank agitation manufacturer. "We sell a lot of carburetors and carburetor kits because ethanol gas will literally eat the carburetor, the gas lines and the gaskets. It's raising havoc with small engines, and it really doesn't matter what name brand it is."

DRAIN IT DRY

Crust Busters uses two-cycle Emak engines, which are designed to run on E10 gasoline with an octane rating of 89 or higher. Emak cautions against buying more oxygenated gasoline than you will use in one or two months. Schmitz recommends disposing of oxygenated fuel that isn't used in two weeks and to run the engine dry if not used after that time.

What about my truck?

So why are cars and trucks more tolerant of blended fuels than small engines? Two reasons: Cars and trucks are used more frequently, leaving less time for gasoline to break down. Secondly, unlike carbureted small engines, today's cars and trucks are fuel injected. In such systems, fuel from the tank forward is contained in a sealed vessel, preventing air and water from entering. Fuel injected engines also have numerous sensors that ensure the engine receives the proper air/fuel mixture. These "smart" engines have the ability to make adjustments for variations in fuel that carburetors cannot.

Radue says if a small engine is more than 10 years old, it's probably a good idea to seek out an E0 fuel.

"Anything 5 years old or less would have been engineered to run on 10 percent blended fuels," he says. "You can run the 10 percent fuels in older products; you just run a higher risk."

As with any equipment, it's always a good practice to check the operator's manual for the manufacturer's recommendations. **P**



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What's Read All Over?

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Compact and Versatile

MyTana's midsize camera is a fit across multiple industries *By Craig Mandli*

Often, the business that succeeds is the one that can offer the most to its customers. That means not only streamlining operations, but also diversifying service offerings — in essence, offering more with less. That idea was on full display in the MyTana Mfg. Company booth and its MS11-NG midsize video inspection camera at the 2016 Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show.

The MS11-NG can be used to inspect 3- to 4-inch lines with up to 150 feet of range. According to MyTana President Jock Donaldson, the camera is not only a fit for sewer and drain cleaners, but its lightweight portability also gives plumbers and septic pumpers needing an affordable system for septic drainline inspection a viable option.

“That’s why I feel that this camera is such a great fit for this crowd,” he says. “It’s a product that fits both a private contractor or municipality equally well, or allows a contractor to diversify services. It has the capability of allowing a drain cleaner to perform municipal sewer inspections, or a septic pumper to also do plumbing jobs. It’s one of our most versatile products.”

The camera allows the user to record or upload an inspection using the MyTana viewer app, available for iPhone, iPad and Android. Built-in Wi-Fi allows multiple viewers, as inspection video can be viewed wirelessly up to 100 feet away. The user can also save the job video, upload it to YouTube and email either the video link or still photos to the customer for viewing within minutes.

“Almost everyone has a phone or some other portable device that can receive files,” Donaldson says. “With this system, the customer can review the video or photos in the comfort of their own living room nearly as the inspection is happening. There’s very little delay.”



▲ Boone Greenly, a product manager with MyTana, explains the features of the MS11-NG midsize video inspection camera to a 2016 WWETT Show attendee. The camera allows the user to record or upload an inspection to a personal device, while built-in Wi-Fi allows multiple viewers, as inspection video can be viewed wirelessly at up to 100 feet away. (Photo by Craig Mandli)

It has a 1 1/2-inch color self-leveling camera head, with an “Ice Ball” protective covering that is a field-replaceable and translucent polycarbonate light ring cover built into the camera head. A built-in 512 Hz transmitter allows the technician to locate during the inspection. The camera’s daylight-readable 6.4-inch monitor includes an on-screen footage counter. The unit can be powered with either household electric current or an onboard battery with two-hour life. Media connects through RCA jacks on the front of the unit.

“The self-leveling feature is very popular, especially for customers watching the video, as it keeps the image consistently upright,” Donaldson says. “We also stand

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behind the product, and do all after-sales service and warranty repairs in-house.”

MyTana is a longtime WWETT Show exhibitor and Donaldson considers it a “must-attend” for companies looking to get their products in front of the wastewater industry. The company launched the MS11-NG four years ago, but only recently added Wi-Fi capability — a feature that he says is already proving popular.

“Certainly having the ability to wirelessly send the video to an unconnected device is a huge benefit,” he says. “We believe that we’ve taken a product that was already very strong and desirable, and made it even better. The feedback we’ve received has been overwhelmingly positive.”

Donaldson says his company is already at work on several innovations to present at the 2017 WWETT Show. He says as portable devices continue to offer more, his company needs to work hard to keep up.

“The technology is changing so fast every day,” he says. “You really have to keep on top of it or you’ll miss something. We intend on staying on the cutting edge.” 800/328-8170; www.mytana.com. 

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- Septic System Installation/Repair
- Consulting/Engineering
- Other _____

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PRIMARY JOB FUNCTION?

- President/CEO/Owner
- Management/Supervisor
- Operator/Technician
- Other _____

HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU SUPERVISE OR WORK WITH AT YOUR FACILITY?

- 0-3
- 4-9
- 10-19
- 20+

HOW MANY VEHICLES DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE IN SERVICE?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21+

WHAT IS THE APPROXIMATE POPULATION OF THE AREA IN WHICH YOU PROVIDE SERVICE?

- 0-10,000
- 10,001-50,000
- 50,001-100,000
- 100,001-200,000
- 200,001-500,000
- 500,001+

WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL EQUIPMENT BUDGET?

- \$0-\$50K
- \$51K-\$75K
- \$76K-\$150K
- \$151K-\$250K
- \$251K-\$350K
- \$350K +

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU PERFORM ON A REGULAR BASIS?

- Plumbing Maintenance/Repair
- Sewer/Drain Cleaning
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- Pipe Bursting
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Sewer Line Sabotage

All Ways Drains turns nightmare into quick fix for fast-food restaurant, helping minimize downtime and cost along the way *By Paul Nicolaus*

When a local Wendy's restaurant found itself shutdown with a sewer line blockage, Justin Moe, owner and CEO of All Ways Drains, in Shoreview, Minnesota, had no idea the job would turn into one of the most unique he's ever handled.

The business could not operate until the line was opened up, plain and simple, Moe says, and to make matters worse the issue — which occurred last summer — hit right in the midst of the typically hectic dinnertime.

"Within 30 minutes of being there working on it, the technician knew something was drastically wrong," Moe says. "He suspected that the exterior clean-out was rotted out at the bottom and broken because you could only go down about 8 feet before everything just stopped."

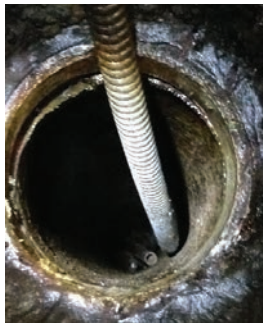
Shocking find

At that point the technician called Moe, and after calling another backup staff member, he hopped in his truck and drove to the restaurant to assess the situation. When Moe tried to cable the main sewer line he ran into the very same problem.

"I got down somewhere between 6 and 8 feet and it just stopped," he says, "so we knew something wasn't right."

Moe also knew the head was not digging through the dirt because it did not come back polished, so he switched heads and started to work on it again using his Ken-Way 400 mainline machine.

"At a typical restaurant like that you're suspecting it's going to be paper towels or grease or something of



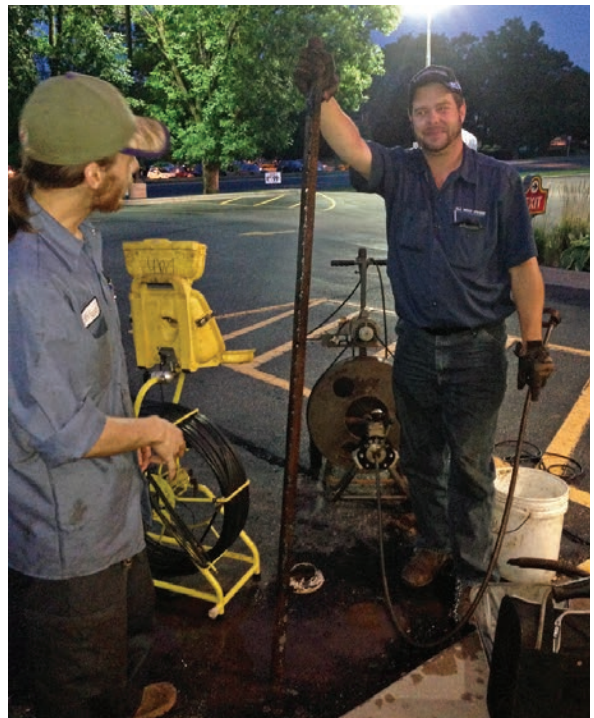
▲ Two 3/4-inch copper pipes, spotted with an SPX Pearpoint camera, still had to be removed.

▶ Justin Moe, owner and CEO of All Ways Drains, holds the metal fence post that was removed from a Wendy's restaurant sewer line/clean-out. A Ken-Way 400 mainline machine was used to extract the post.



Shoreview, Minnesota

COMPANY	All Ways Drains
OWNER	Justin Moe
LOCATION	Shoreview, Minnesota
YEAR FOUNDED	2000
SPECIALTY	Residential and commercial plumbing
WEBSITE	www.allwaysdrains.com



that nature,” Moe says, so when he wrapped the cable line around an object and extracted a large metal fence post, a sense of shock set in.

“At that point, the sewer line opened up and started draining out,” he says. But the surprises weren’t over just yet. An SPX Pearpoint camera revealed two 3/4-inch copper pipes that had been shoved into the clean-out.

Clearly, Moe says, it was an act of vandalism. The clean-out cover was on, so somebody had removed the cover, crammed the materials in there, and then replaced the cover.

Shutdown for only a couple of hours, the restaurant was able to reopen and resume serving customers. All Ways Drains returned the following day to extract the two copper pipes, as requested. Afterward, a Spartan 758 sewer jetter removed any remaining debris.

Words of wisdom

“My understanding is the owner was worried that this store was going to have to be shutdown for days in order to get this dug up and fixed,” Moe says, so the much shorter downtime was well received — not to mention the cost.


“We thought that line was broken and it was going to have to be dug up,” he says. Rather than a hefty bill and an inability to conduct business for several days, they were right back up and running with a modest tab to take care of.

When it comes to emergency work in general, Moe says he’s lived, learned and come to follow a set of important rules.

“Rule No. 1 is answer the phone,” he says, “and rule No. 2 is take care of the customer.”

The third rule is if you don’t take care of a customer somebody else will.

The emergency rules of thumb feed into Moe’s overall business plan, which he can list off on five fingers: answer the phone, show up, get the work done, clean up behind yourself, and be nice and honest.

“For me it’s very simple,” he says. “You’re here to help people, and that’s what you’re supposed to do.” 

“For me it’s very simple. You’re here to help people, and that’s what you’re supposed to do.”

Justin Moe

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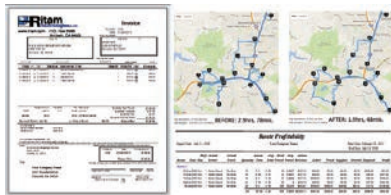
Business Systems and Opportunities

By Craig Mandli

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from **Ritam Technologies** allows companies to keep their familiar QuickBooks environment and take advantage of automated billing. Every transaction is instantly memorized, and only touched when something changes. Billing is automatic, whether monthly, 28-day, or a special event, including automatic “from” and “to” billing dates, proration, damage waivers and delivery charges. It enables building routes and inventory assignment from a single point of entry. QuickBooks continues to capture revenue totals, balances the checkbook, and accountants can continue using it for tax reporting. Summit helps companies grow through route optimizing with the latest mapping software and mobile route management. Optimized routes can be shared with drivers as they get voice navigation, notes for each job, customer signature capture, and management gets tracking of current location and route status. **800/662-8471; www.ritam.com.**

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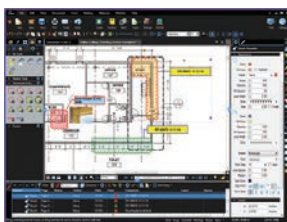


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ServiceTitan is a mobile, cloud-based software platform that helps service companies streamline operations, improve customer service and grow their business. Its platform includes CRM, intelligent dispatch, comprehensive reporting, marketing tools, mobile connectivity for technicians and QuickBooks integration. **855/899-0970; www.servicetitan.com.**



Taco Earns Best Places to Work, health awards



▲ Taco Comfort Solutions COO Wil VandeWiel holds the Best Places to Work in Rhode Island award. Flanking him (from left) are Stephen Farrell, CEO of UnitedHealthcare, the presenting sponsor, and Mark Murphy, editor of *Providence Business News*.

Taco Comfort Solutions was named a 2016 Best Places to Work in Rhode Island by the *Providence Business News*. This is a second Best Workplace award for Taco. The company also received an Exemplary Worksite Health Award from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce for its programs encouraging employee health and well-being. Taco has a well-established employee wellness program and has earned the health award for 11 consecutive years.

Isuzu opens Center of Excellence training facility



Isuzu Commercial Truck of America opened its first Center of Excellence in northeast Pennsylvania. The complex includes a 100,000-square-foot parts distribution center and 30,000-square-foot training and technical assistance facility.

The Work Truck Show sets future dates

The Work Truck Show and Green Truck Summit return to Indianapolis in 2017 and 2018. The 2017 show will be held March 14-17 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. Dates for the 2018 show are March 6-9. Educational sessions, including the Green Truck Summit, begin March 6.

PHCC members receive discounted call answering service

Round-the-clock call answering services are part of a new benefit available to members of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors – National Association (PHCC) through a partnership with Minnesota-based Time Communications. PHCC members can sign up online to receive a discounted monthly rate on call management services, including 24/7/365 call answering, paging and dispatch service, emergency response, appointment scheduling, on-call scheduling and dedicated operators.

Ferguson's Keltner named CFO of the Year



Ferguson's Dave Keltner was named CFO of the Year by *Virginia Business* magazine. The award recognizes chief financial officers whose ingenuity and dedication have led to success for their companies, their staff and their professional careers. Keltner was honored in the Publicly Traded Companies category. During his tenure as CFO, Keltner guided a team of associates who have overseen 75 acquisitions and integrations, including 35 over the past six years that have added \$1.1 billion to Ferguson's annual sales.

Roth Industries breaks ground on \$6 million expansion



Roth Industries broke ground in July for the \$6 million expansion of its Watertown, New York, facility. The project will include a 27,000-square-foot expansion, installation of a new blow-molding machine and the creation of at least 12 new jobs. The new machine will add the capacity to produce additional product lines at the Watertown plant that are in prototype development now.

STIHL celebrates 90th anniversary



The family-owned STIHL company celebrated its 90th anniversary in July with staff and their families as well as company retirees at the founding company in Waiblingen-Neustadt, Germany. Andreas Stihl developed his first chain saw in 1926, a two-man electric model. A gasoline chain saw was announced in 1929. **PI**

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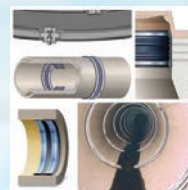
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Product Spotlight

RIDGID adjustable handle provides added grip on large plastic pipe

By Ed Wodalski

The Straplock pipe handle from RIDGID is designed to grip and apply force in all directions during the installation and maintenance of 3- to 8-inch-diameter plastic pipe.

Features include rapid size adjustment and a rubberized, reinforced strap made to provide maximum grip and minimize marring. The fixed handle position helps align and hold joints in place while the cement sets.

"It's sometimes difficult to confidently move and manipulate a large-diameter pipe into position," says Josh Sooy, RIDGID marketing director. "If you're going to be gluing plastic pipe, you want to have the best possible grip to ensure a joint sets all the way and that you get it in the right position the first time. With plastic, if it sets in the wrong position, you're going to be cutting it out. There's no redos."

Made for wet and cold environments where gripping smooth-walled pipe can be difficult, the handle can be used in pairs to aid in complex installations. Other applications include overhead work, tight quarters installation and securing pipe during prep.

"We had a customer who was installing a vent pipe and the roofers had flashed around the pipe, so when he was finishing the installation in the attic, he wasn't able to move the pipe down into the fitting with his bare hands," Sooy says. "With the pipe handle, he was easily able to complete the job."

The pipe handle also increases efficiency, enabling one person to complete some jobs typically done by two.

"Working down in trenches with some of the larger-diameter pipe you need two guys to maneuver them into position," Sooy says. "With the pipe handle you get a good enough grip and leverage that you can oftentimes complete the job with one guy."

The pipe handle weighs 0.75 pounds and is 3.5 inches wide, 6.95 inches long and 2.5 inches deep. The strap can be replaced, if needed.



"If the strap gets dirty, just clean it off with water," Sooy says. "There's very little maintenance, but we recommend you clean the strap off to maximize grip." **800/769-7743; www.ridgid.com.**

Milwaukee Tool Heated Work Gear

M12 Heated Gear from Milwaukee Tool features heating technology that pairs with proprietary materials to enhance performance, durability and comfort. The 2016 line includes all-new designs across the entire range of gear, from jackets and hoodies to heavy-duty work wear. Features include ToughShell stretch polyester for longer life and improved wind/water resistance and FreeFlex mobility enhancements, including adjustable cuffs and waist, a drop-tail extended back, and an integrated battery pocket — accessible from the outside of the jacket. The jackets can provide up to eight hours of heat distributed across the chest, back and pockets for a full day of work on a single battery charge. Colors include black, gray, red with gray side panels and Realtree Xtra camo. **800/729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com.**



Water Cannon electric pressure washer package

The electric-powered Jetter Package pressure washer from Water Cannon delivers 2 gpm and 1,500 psi. The low profile and compact hand-carry version includes a 150-foot by 1/4-inch Piranha jetter hose, a 50-foot by 1/8-inch trap hose, ball valve, pulsation valve on demand and four stainless steel jetter nozzles. The pressure regulator can be adjusted from 150 to 1,500 psi. **800/333-9274; www.watercannon.com/catalogrequest.aspx.**

Coxreels exhaust hose reels

The 300 Series exhaust hose reels from Coxreels are designed to extract fumes directly from the source of their emission and maintain the safest workplace air quality. Coxreels exhaust reels store lengths of large-diameter exhaust hose and mount to any wall, overhead and floor position. The heavy-duty frame is built to provide strength, durability and stability. Components are individually powder-coated. **800/269-7335; www.coxreels.com.**



Liberty Pumps battery backup pump systems

The StormCell 442 Series of battery backup pump systems from Liberty Pumps feature 12-volt backup sump pumps with professional-grade chargers, an energy-efficient DC pump for longer runtimes and optional NightEye wireless technology for remote monitoring of the pump system through a tablet or smartphone. The NightEye app is a free download and is compatible with Apple iOS and Android devices. **800/543-2550; www.libertypumps.com.**



McElroy expands Acrobat fusion machine line

The Acrobat 250 fusion machine from McElroy Manufacturing features a lighter-weight hydraulic power unit that is easier to move around the job site and consumes less power than previous models. A heater and guide rod latching system eliminates the need to manually hold the heater in place during overhead fusions, reducing operator fatigue. An ergonomic handlebar design makes it easy to use from all angles, even overhead. Designed for fusing 2- to 10-inch polypropylene pipe, the Acrobat 250 enables operators to fuse pipe in the confines of the walls, ceilings and floors. **918/836-8611; www.mcelroy.com/fusion.**



ThermOmegaTech temperature control

The enhanced Circuit Solver self-actuating temperature control from ThermOmegaTech features an integrated union and optional built-in check valve as well as a complete assembly. NSF 61 certified, the control continuously maintains the end of each domestic hot-water supply line in a recirculation system at the specified water temperature. This inline valve eliminates the need for manual balancing. It also minimizes flow through the system by only allowing small amounts of water to pass through once the setpoint is reached, reducing system wear and allowing for a smaller circulator that won't consume as much power. **877/379-8258; www.thermomegatech.com.**



GROHE Bluetooth shower speaker

The Aquatunes Bluetooth wireless shower speaker from GROHE and Philips electronics, available in Glossy Moon white and gray, can be fitted to 7/8-, 1- and 1 1/8-inch shower rails. The speaker connects to mobile devices within 25 feet by pressing the sync button. The IPx6 portable speaker continues

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to play while charging in the IPx7 docking station. The speaker includes on/off, volume and next-track controls, built-in rechargeable battery for over eight hours of playtime, 2-watt high-quality sound, LED indication for power on/off charging and induction charging docking station with integrated power cord. **800/444-7643; www.groheamerica.com.**



Caleffi fill and flush pump cart

The portable Hydroflush fill and flush pump cart from Caleffi North America is preassembled and leak-tested for a safe, quick and clean way to fill and flush solar, geothermal and hydronic heating systems. Features include a welded steel chassis, powder-coated frame, stainless steel filter and 10-inch rubber tires. The Grundfos CM1-3 stainless steel pump with 1-15 gpm flow handles water, glycol and hydronic cleaning fluids. Maximum tank medium temperature is 150 degrees F. The 0.5 hp pump delivers 0-55 psi and is rated at 7.6 amps at 115 volts AC. **414/238-2360; www.caleffi.com.**

Ranger Design seat covers

Stain-, tear- and wear-resistant seat covers from Ranger Design are designed to fit popular commercial vans. Made from heavy-duty CORDURA fabric for puncture and tear resistance, the seat covers are urethane-coated for additional protection against fluid spillage and stains. The seat covers are machine washable and can be installed in less than 30 minutes. **800/565-5321; www.rangerdesign.com.**



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