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PIVOTING PLUMBER

Knowing when and how to adjust to industry changes allows New York's Nebrasky Plumbing to grow from a once bankrupt company to a thriving one **Page 12**

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Tracing a Path to Profits

Pulsar 2000 line-tracing technology keeps technicians homed in on the correct pipe, avoiding costly leak-location mistakes.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Jim Cusanello, plumber at Nebraska Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, works with a gas pipe at a commercial building in Middletown, New York. The company, owned by Paul Nebraska, has 30 employees and offers services in Orange County, upper Westchester and Dutchess counties. (Photo by Allyse Pulliam)

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Published monthly by COLE Publishing, Inc.
1720 Maple Lake Dam Rd., PO Box 220
Three Lakes, WI 54562

Call toll-free 800-257-7222

Outside of U.S. or Canada call 715-546-3346

Mon.- Fri., 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. CST

Website: www.plumbermag.com

Email: info@plumbermag.com | Fax: 715-546-3786

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CIRCULATION: Circulation averages 28,058 copies per month. This figure includes both U.S. and international distribution.

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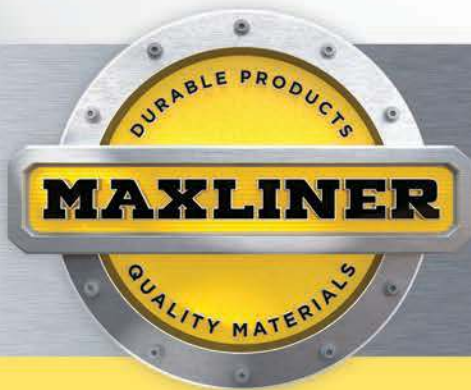
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Cory Dellenbach

Getting Tech Savvy

Time to put away the fears and pick up that smartphone and other smart tools to provide even more options for your customers

W

e've all seen the *Terminator* movie series and know the story: Machines take over the world, all is doomed and only John Connor can save the human race. Sorry if I spoiled it for anyone.

The *Terminator* movies do a nice job of telling us that we should be scared of technology and are moving too fast in developing it. Should we be that scared, though? I don't believe so.

Tools, software and smart devices are only going to help advance this industry in the coming years. Let's look at some of the advancements in the plumbing world already:

- **No more soldering** — There are tools available that allow you to crimp and snap together pipes instead of soldering. This can save a lot of time on job sites and allows your crews to be more productive.
- **Navigation and organization** — Software is available to more easily get your technicians to their jobs, handle payments and monitor inventory. This can help your company save money in the long run.
- **Home automation** — Everyone seems to have a smartphone these days, and now plumbing equipment (like water heaters, fixtures and more) are coming to your home that pair with these phones.

TAKING A HOLD OF THE TECH

Nebraska Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, featured in this issue, is a plumbing company that isn't afraid to meet technology head-on. Owner Paul Nebraska believes it's just the start of smart technology in the plumbing industry and more will be coming as the millennial and younger generations continue to get older and buy houses of their own.

Nebraska has started to grow his niche to include installation and programming of this smart technology in the plumbing world. While much of it is still new, he's already seeing several homeowners move toward automation.

Nebraska has even outfitted his own home with some smart technology, including leak-sensing tools that learn

his home's water usage and alert him via smartphone app if there appears to be more-than-usual usage.

While he admits that there is still a long way to go with some of the technology, he doesn't want to be left behind in what customers are starting to ask for.

Customers want this new technology as they get more tech savvy, and you shouldn't be afraid to move with them in this direction.

DON'T BE AFRAID

Take a look through this issue and you'll see other examples of where technology is getting smarter: from our On the Road feature on line-tracing technology that keeps contractors homed in on the correct pipe, avoiding costly leak-location digging, to different tools that will help you keep track of your inventory — and even order for you if you are running low.

Customers want this new technology as they get more tech savvy, and you shouldn't be afraid to move with them in this direction.

Start researching home automation technology, and maybe even follow Nebraska's method of installing it in your own home to learn it. The faster you do, the faster you'll become the professional at it instead of your competitor.

WHAT ARE YOU USING?

Are you already installing smart technology in homes? If you aren't busy running away from Arnold Schwarzenegger as the terminator, take some time and email me at editor@plumbermag.com or call me at 715-350-8436 and let me know what type of smart tools you are using.

Enjoy this issue! 📧

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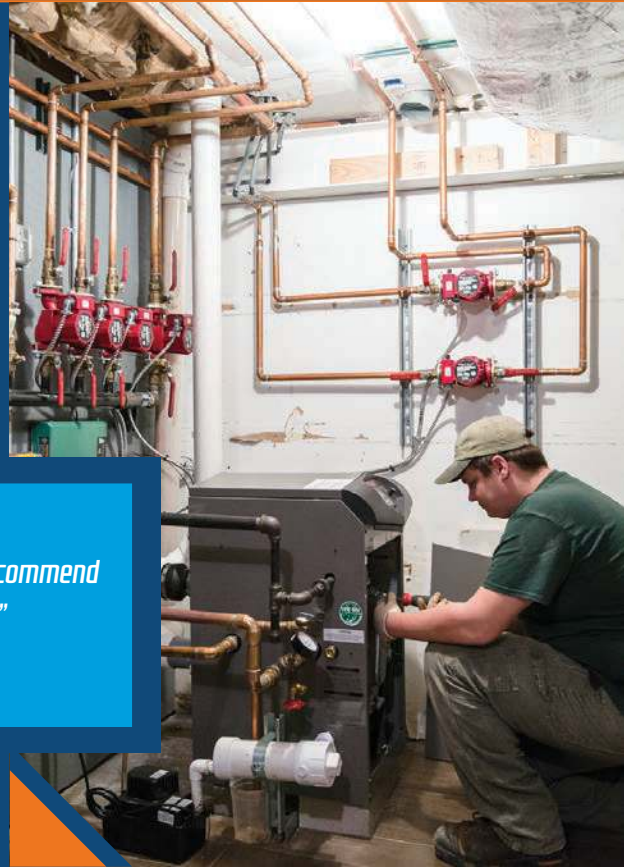
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BUILDING A TEAM

How to Find the Right Skill Level Blend

You don't only employ top-level master plumbers. Every company is made up of employees with a range of varying skill sets. Here are some things to consider as you determine the correct balance of apprentices, journeymen, and masters on your crew.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

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— *5 Reasons Why a Financial Adviser is Key to Business Success*

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

9 Questions to Ask Before Starting Your Own Plumbing Shop

If you've been working in this industry for a long time but always for someone else, you have perhaps thought about taking a shot at starting your

own company. In this online exclusive, a longtime plumber turned business owner who was once in that situation offers some advice on what you should be thinking about before taking that leap. ▶ plumbermag.com/featured

HYDRONIC SYSTEMS

The Do's and Don'ts of Hydronic Piping Design

There's no definitive guide when it comes to designing hydronic piping systems. Every project has its own unique variables that determine which layout is the best fit. But even with these differences, successful designs share some common characteristics. Here's an overview of best practices that will steer any hydronic piping design in the right direction.

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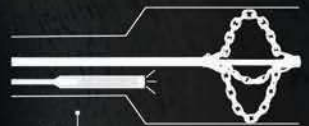
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▼ Paul Nebrasky, owner of Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, stands in the plumbing room at a house near Monroe, New York.

PIVOTING PLUMBER

Knowing when and how to adjust to industry changes allows New York's Nebrasky Plumbing to grow from a once bankrupt company to a thriving one

By Cory Dellenbach ■ Photography by Allyse Pulliam



Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, Monroe, New York

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| OWNER | Paul Nebrasky |
| EMPLOYEES | 30 |
| SERVICES | Plumbing installation, service and repair; new construction plumbing; heating; air conditioning; home energy assessments |
| SERVICE AREA | Orange County, upper Westchester and Dutchess counties |
| WEBSITE | www.nebraskyplumbing.com |



“Over the years, there have been bumps in the road, but we’ve added services. We’ve been able to move as the economy has moved and pivot as business changed.”

Paul Nebrasky

FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING

Nebrasky found his way into the industry and owning the company in a roundabout way. While he was working for other plumbing firms, his stepfather was operating his own one-man plumbing company.

“I wasn’t working for him at the time because I couldn’t get along with him,” Nebrasky says. “Like a lot of kids who try to work with their dad, sometimes it just doesn’t work.”

While his stepfather was a skilled plumber, it was the operating end of the business that he wasn’t so great at — not knowing what to charge, for example. Finally, in 1988, Nebrasky’s stepfather had to file for bankruptcy, giving his stepson a call to say he was done and he and Nebrasky’s mom were moving to Florida.

“The truck was already mine from the first time he went bankrupt, so this time he said he could leave me the rest of the company if I would like it,” Nebrasky says. “I took over the company and changed the name, and since then we’ve grown.”

At the age of 24, Nebrasky knew it was his time to take a try at owning a plumbing business. The risks were low as he had just two roommates, wasn’t married or engaged and had very little expenses at the time.

“It was a great time to start the company,” Nebrasky says. “Was it scary? Yes, but I never looked back.”

The company is more diverse now, offering services such as new construction plumbing, heating, air conditioning and home energy assessments.

THE BIG PROJECTS

New construction is one of the company’s most recent pivots. That division began with a focus on residential housing, but as the area’s needs have changed, so has that focus.

“Our area that we serve has changed from residential housing to more commercial buildings because LEGOLAND is building its first Northeast theme park 15 minutes from my office,” Nebrasky says. “What followed LEGOLAND were hotels.”

Learning to pivot was one of the best business lessons Paul Nebrasky has ever picked up in his more than 30-year plumbing career.

The 54-year-old owner of Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling has had to pivot his company’s service offerings several times over the last three decades in order to stay on top of the industry and continue to be a go-to for customers.

“In the last 31 years, we’ve grown a bankrupt business into a 30-employee business,” Nebrasky says. “Over the years, there have been bumps in the road, but we’ve added services. We’ve been able to move as the economy has moved and pivot as business changed.”

While the Monroe, New York-based company has added services, one thing that hasn’t changed over the last 31 years is its dedication to customer service.

“Any great company you want to talk about needs to start with customer service,” Nebrasky says. “If you don’t have great customer service, you’re going out of business.”

That won’t change anytime soon either, as the company brings on more technology that will help its technicians serve customers even better in the years to come.

“I want to make sure we are selling the best of the products that are coming out and coming out quickly.”

Paul Nebrasky

Nebrasky saw this shift three years ago and now is doing small residential hotels like Holiday Inn Expresses.

“Right now, we’re in the process of doing plumbing in three hotels — which 10 years ago if you would have told me I would take on a big job like that, I would have told you that you were nuts.”

He says he saw the need and realized if he didn’t pivot the company into that direction, his company could be in trouble.

GETTING SMARTER

That mindset of adjusting to what is happening in the market isn’t just on the construction side. It’s also on the technological side. With younger homeowners being the current trend, the company is seeing a more tech-savvy

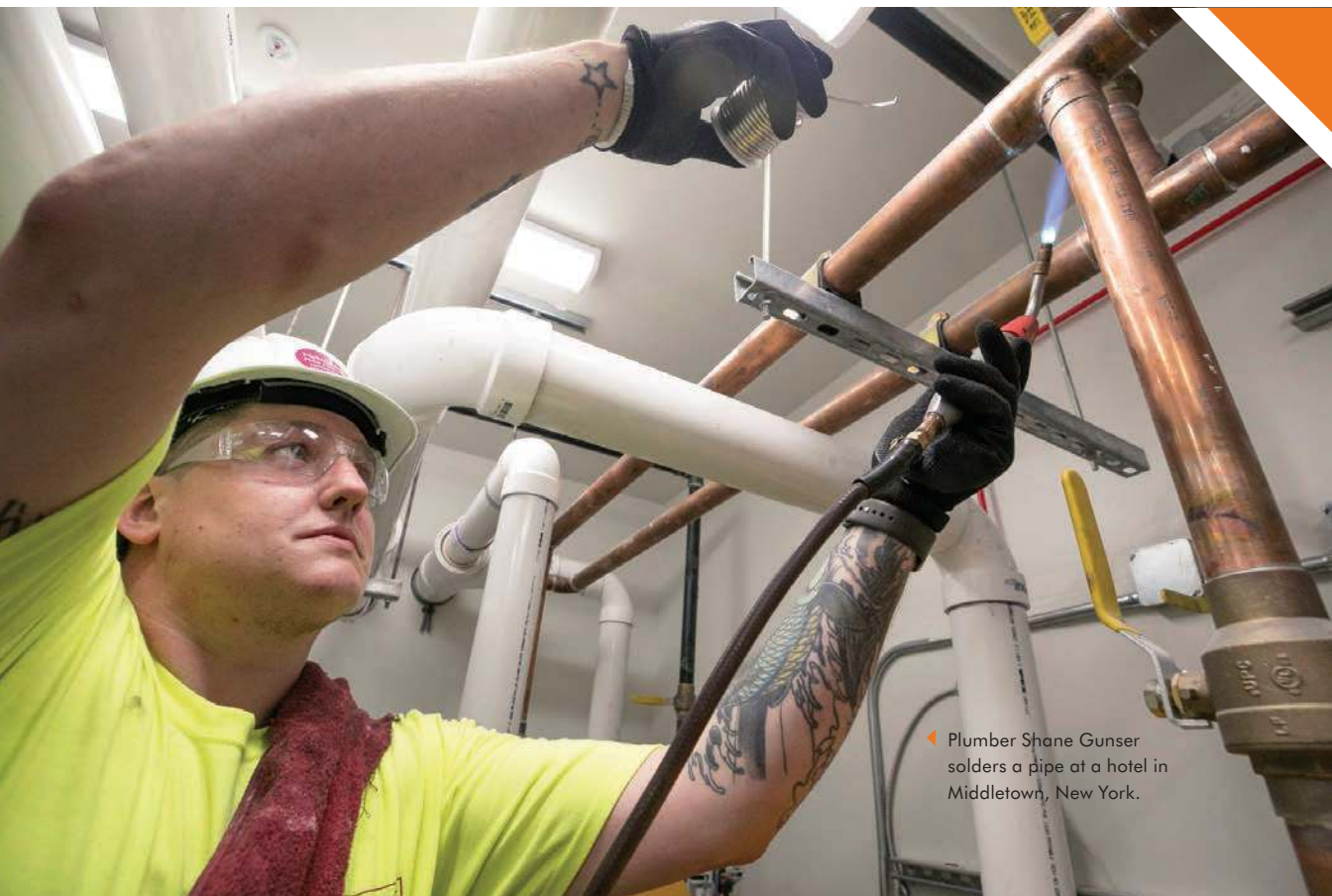
customer taking shape.

Many homeowners today are looking for more ways to use their smartphones or Alexa-type devices in their homes. “In the HVAC industry, some of the smart technologies have been out for a while, like the Nest thermostats that allow users to operate a thermostat from their phone,” Nebrasky says. “Recently, large manufacturers like Kohler, Moen and GROHE are starting to come out with smart technology in plumbing.”

Nebrasky jumped on the smart technology quickly, saying it works in HVAC, so why couldn’t it work in plumbing? “It comes down to customer demand,” Nebrasky says. “We have to look at what our customers want down the road. And the millennials are going to want this.”

With that smart technology has come some growing pains. One of the biggest has been training the plumbers to install the technology.

“You have to send a technician or plumber who can tie this into the homeowner’s Wi-Fi,” Nebrasky says. “You would not believe how many customers don’t know their Wi-Fi access number. It’s not as easy as just putting this in and leaving. You have to tie it into Wi-Fi and program it with a laptop. Plumbers aren’t used to that.”



▶ Plumber Shane Gunser solders a pipe at a hotel in Middletown, New York.

Taking on the recession

In his 31 years of business, Paul Nebrasky has attended several seminars over the years to help him get more comfortable running a business, but what really taught him the most about business was making it through the recession in 2008.

"Getting through that really shaped the rest of the business for me," says Nebrasky, owner of Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling in Monroe, New York. "It's pretty easy being in business when the economy is going up every year and you're making more money, but now you're in a recession and you have to learn to operate a business and be a businessman in a recession when most people around you haven't ever been in one."

His company wasn't immune to the hardships of that time as construction industries — including plumbing — slowed.

"For the first time, I had to lay off people, like many others," Nebrasky says. "We had 32 employees at that point and I'm laying off people. As I'm doing that, I have trucks sitting outside that I'm making payments on. I

thought to myself that there had to be a way to repurpose those plumbing trucks and get them back on the road making money."

That's when New York began an incentive for property owners to save energy. Contractors were trained to come into homes and see where they were losing energy and what could be done to fix it, whether it be added insulation, new windows or air sealing.

"That program had just started, and I thought it would be a great way to pivot because not only could we do the home energy assessment, but we could sell them on the boilers or heating plan if they needed it," Nebrasky says.

The company trained three technicians who were otherwise going to be laid off. The training, Nebrasky says, was paid in part by the state.

"To this day, it's not a huge part of my business, but it's a nice part of my business," Nebrasky says. "It was born out of ingenuity and necessity during the recession. We have two full-time people doing it now."



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▲ The Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling crew at its facility in Monroe, New York.

▼ Toniann Zduniak, service manager and HVAC specialist, monitors a Uponor Phyn Plus smart water assistant and shut-off via an app on a tablet at a home in Warwick, New York.



Nebrasky himself is a user of smart plumbing technology in his own home. His home, which was recently built, has the Uponor Phyn installed in it, which will shut off the water if it detects a leak.

“We have eight of those in right now, and one of them is in my own home,” Nebrasky says. “It’s a great product, but like a lot of technology, it’s not without its quirks.”

Nebrasky has seen some of those quirks himself — both good and bad.

After installing a washer and dryer at his home, Nebrasky’s Phyn alerted him via smartphone that there was unexpected water usage in the house. He called his wife, who wasn’t home to see if she left something running. She didn’t.

“So right on the phone, I was able to go in and shut the house water off,” Nebrasky says. “When my wife got home, she found that one of the hoses from the wash machine had a slight crack in it. Not a lot of damage was done because the Phyn alerted us right away. It learns what your water usage is, and it saved me from a flood in my house.”

Smart technology also sends alerts to the customer’s plumber if they so choose, giving the plumber a better idea of where a leak might be.

“The Phyn will tell you when there is a leak, where it thinks it is coming from and how much there is,” Nebrasky says. “At the end, it’ll ask if the homeowner would like to alert the plumber, and if the homeowner says yes, it’ll automatically call us. That’s all built right into the system.”

Nebrasky is looking forward to seeing where the industry moves with the technology and how customers react to it.

Continued ▶



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▲ Plumber Jim Cusanello works with a gas pipe in Middletown, New York.

“I think it really sells itself,” he says. “I’m not fully pushing it at this point, but I’m offering it because I see where it is going. I want to make sure we are selling the best of the products that are coming out and coming out quickly.”

DELIVERING THE TECHNOLOGY

Helping the plumbing technicians deliver that smart technology to homes are the company’s fully stocked Nissan NV vans, which are carrying the typical hand tools of plumbers along with some pipe components that could be needed on the job.

Hand tools of choice for Nebrasky are anything by Milwaukee Tool. “I’m a Milwaukee guy all the way,” he says. “I moved to them about four years ago because of the service they were giving us.”

Nebrasky is quick to note though that if there was one area of his company that needed improvement, it would be the inventory in both the shop and on the trucks. After having a bar-coding system installed, Nebrasky’s warehouse manager retired and moved, and the position wasn’t refilled.

“The warehouse system got back to where it was prior to the bar-coding system,” Nebrasky says. “We watch it, but our inventory system is not where it needs to be. I do not have a comprehensive inventory system, but it is on our list of things to do yet this year as ServiceTitan is coming out with an inventory module. We’re hoping that works out and we’ll get our inventory back into check.”

“It comes down to customer demand. We have to look at what our customers want down the road. And the millennials are going to want this.”

Paul Nebrasky

The company uses ServiceTitan for its billing and scheduling needs already, with each technician carrying a tablet on the truck with them.

A STEADY GROWTH

When looking ahead to the rest of 2019 and into 2020, Nebrasky is forecasting continued growth, but at a pace that is sustainable.

“I’ve learned from where we’ve grown too quickly and I’ve seen other companies grow too quickly,” he says. “I want to add services and be nimble enough to pivot with smart technology and pivot with the economy.”

One possibility for the company is adding an electrical division.

“Your great customer wants you in the house to do everything,” Nebrasky says. “If they trust you in the house to do your plumbing and heating and home energy assessment, why put another contractor in there who they might not trust?”

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Anja Smith

Sales Isn't a Four-Letter Word

Improving a sales process can lead to better morale, happier customers and more business *By Anja Smith*

Have you ever sat through a painful sales pitch? Maybe the salesperson was a little too enthusiastic? They asked formulaic questions, came across stiff and their talking points were inauthentic?

Maybe the salesperson provided a bullet point list of vaguely sinister reasons and suspiciously positive benefits. They laid out three perfectly good, better, best options and inevitably pointed to the middle-tier to suggest it is the right one for you.

This scenario is what I always imagined “sales training” to produce. I wanted nothing to do with that. So we never did sales training with our plumbing staff.

It took considerable soul-searching for us to get comfortable with the idea that to provide even better customer service, we had to improve our sales process.

Our values seem to conflict with the very idea: We want to be authentic and unflinchingly honest; we want to build relationships founded on mutual respect; we want to be a trusted partner to our customers.

“Selling” to our customers doesn’t jive. We provide solutions, service and support, but never sales.

Defining customer service

On the other hand, like many companies, we pride ourselves on customer service. We define the ideal experience as one where the client feels informed and qualified to make the best decision for his or her property, based on

the conversation and recommendations of our plumbers.

Again, honesty, trust, integrity and respect are at the center of that customer-vendor relationship. Searching for ways to perform closer to this ideal, we looked at opportunities for improvement.

Communication seemed to be at the crux of everything. To reach this ideal, we have to build rapport with the customer, provide them with information and help them arrive at a decision.

Oops, that sounds painfully like a sales conversation.

Finding the sales-service overlap

This realization was eye opening. It took considerable soul-searching for us to get comfortable with the idea that to provide even better customer service, we had to improve our sales process.

It took an understanding that sales doesn’t have to be that cringeworthy robotic experience.

Sales processes and excellent customer service coexist every day. Sometimes they come from harmless upsell-asks — “Do you want fries with that?” — or conveniently placing the batteries in the checkout aisle of the toy store.

These are gentle reminders from the experts that you might later wish you’d bought one more thing.

When it comes to plumbing repairs, the customer should have options. I don’t want anyone deciding what is best for my property but me. I want expert advice, guidance even. I want to understand what the pros and cons of each option are.

But that means that the person there to diagnose and complete the repairs has to be prepared to have that conversation.

A new, effective perspective

My entire perspective changed when I started looking at sales through a customer service lens. Under the header

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of customer service, we started working with our team on these items. There are no formulas. No scripts.

Instead, we focused on their expertise as an essential part of the conversation. Product training and literature to support the plumber's findings allow that expertise to shine.

We were shocked at how quickly training began to take effect. Sales increased, sure. But so did morale. The plumbers showed more confidence, and reviews soared.

Sales training doesn't mean you have to shove a "good, better, best" template down your staff's throat. It means coaching them and providing tools for better customer conversations.

Customer service and sales can coexist peacefully. In fact, they may be better together. 

 Anja Smith is the managing partner at All Clear Plumbing and writer/speaker at Tradebiz Toolbox. Contact Anja at www.tradebiztoolbox.com.



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Joan Koehne

Setting the Price

Figuring out what to charge doesn't have to be complicated; using established resources is one way to determine prices

By Joan Koehne

Setting a price for your work can be one of the trickiest things to determine when you're starting a business. You want to hit the sweet spot of charging enough to turn a fair profit, but not too much that you lose customers.

Cliff Lao, owner of Cliff's Classic Care Plumbing, serves residential customers living within 75 miles of Sierra Vista, Arizona. His trusted resource for pricing is the Plumber's Pricing Manual, a print and digital resource that provides product and pricing information for over 11,000 common mechanical items.

The manual, first published in 1937, is available through Trade Service, a Division of Trimble. Trade Service publishes product prices for residential, commercial and industrial markets based on manufacturers' reports.

Cliff's Classic Care Plumbing subscribes to the paperback edition of the manual.

"We have it mailed to us. That way we have it on site," Lao says. "If a customer should ask a price, we can look up prices in the book as a guide."

MAKING IT A GUIDE

Lao uses the pricing manual as a guideline for his residential plumbing business but adjusts the price depending on the labor involved and the complexity of the project.

"In southeast Arizona, I do a lot of work in houses that are really old," Lao says. "You can't go in there with a flat rate, because you don't know what you're going to get into."

In general, Lao uses the manual to gauge a fair profit. He begins with the flat rate published in the manual and adjusts his prices accordingly. "If things go better, we'd charge them less due to less labor being involved. If things go worse, we'd charge more, again due to more labor being involved," he says.

The Plumber's Pricing Manual gives contractors confidence that they're estimating a job with accuracy, says Shaun Gambardella, product manager at Trade Service, MEP Division at Trimble.

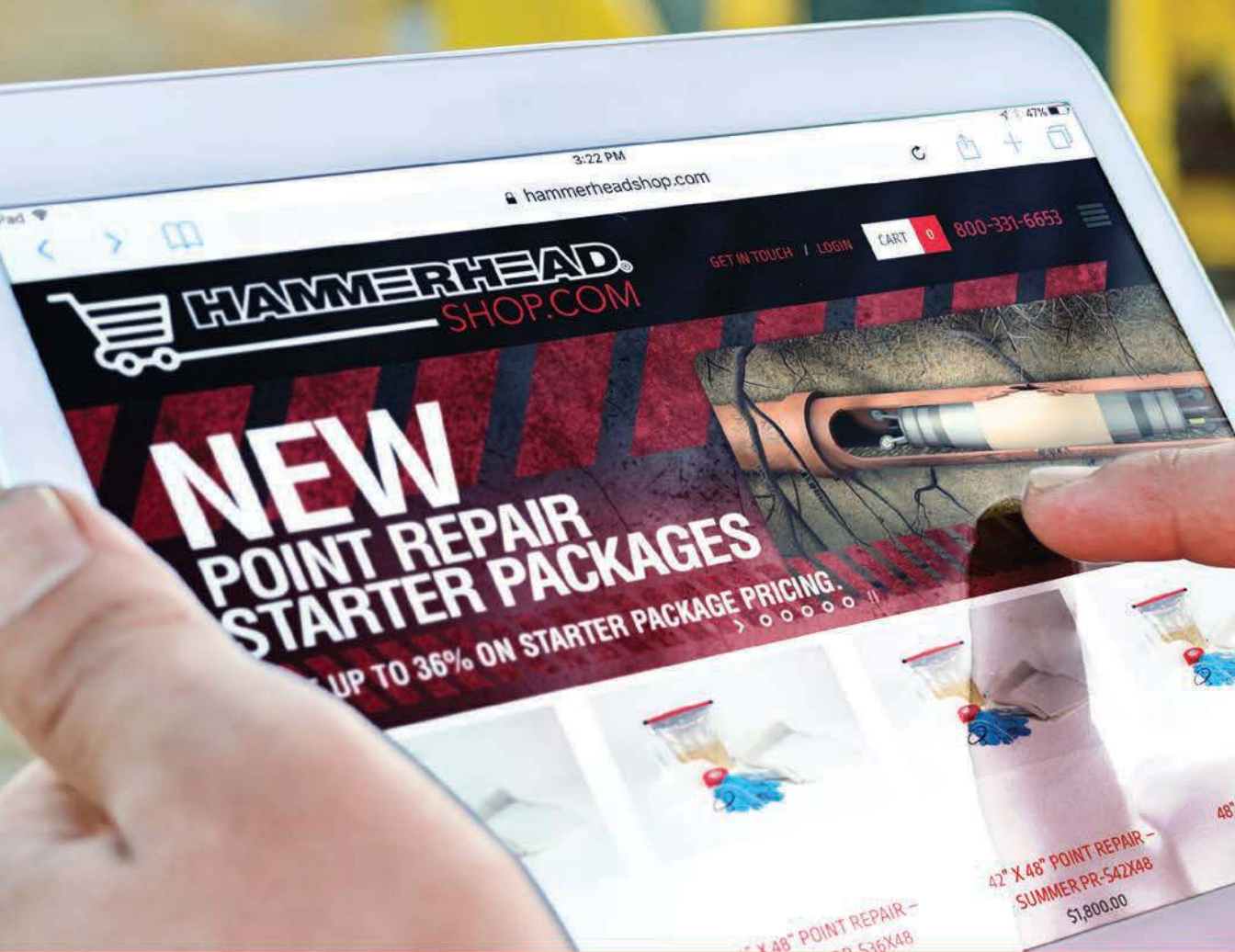
Continued ▶

“You can't go in there with a flat rate, because you don't know what you're going to get into.”

Cliff Lao

▶ Cliff Lao, owner of Cliff's Classic Care Plumbing, stands next to one of his unique plumbing service vehicles in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Lao uses the Plumber's Pricing Manual to help set his prices for his company. (Photography by Mark Henle)





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“We have relationships with over 2,000 manufacturers that set the pricing for the contractors, and we then distribute the pricing,” Gambardella says.

UPDATED REGULARLY

Each quarter, the paperback manual is updated, published and distributed. The Plumber’s Pricing Manual includes prices for 11,000 of the most common mechanical items.

“It sounds like a lot, but when you go through all the product categories and start accumulating the most common products, the list quantity adds up fast,” Gambardella says. For example, the hub and spigot soil fittings pages include pricing for single and double hub pipes, gaskets, lubricants, combos, reducers, closet bends and more.

“If you compare the manual to a distributor’s e-commerce store that averages roughly 200,000 items, 11,000 items is only a little over 5% of that total. The 11,000 items we select are the bread and butter items for the majority of plumbing and mechanical contractors,” Gambardella says.

Trade Service maintains a database of over 2 million items, and hundreds of thousands of price changes occur every quarter.

“These price changes correlate to a variety of reasons such as fluctuating pricing on commodities like copper and steel, tariffs and the state of the economy,” Gambardella says.

WORKING WITH SOFTWARE

The manual is a stand-alone resource for mechanical contractors, but it’s also used in conjunction with bidding and business management software. The majority of Trade Service customers use the company’s TRA-SER products, which integrate industry bidding and business management software.

“With TRA-SER, the contractor can easily set up its database to be automatically updated on a weekly basis and have access to our plumbing and mechanical database of over 3 million items,” Gambardella says.

The database is integrated into Trimble’s Autobid Mechanical software, so contractors can accurately estimate a high volume of jobs.

“Performing estimates manually has a lot of room for human error, and when using Autobid Mechanical, it drastically reduces the risk for error and increases the consistency of your estimates,” Gambardella says.

Cliff’s Classic Care Plumbing, run by Lao and his wife, Debra, operates on a smaller scale. About 10% of its clients request an estimate, and Lao writes each with flair.

“Handwriting has always been a love of mine, so I usually handwrite it,” Lao says. As a follow-up to the estimate, Lao fully explains what the project will involve.

“I will walk them through what I am about to do for them, so they get a clear understanding,” he says. “If you explain it to them, it just makes them more confident in your work.”

“I will walk them through what I am about to do for them, so they get a clear understanding. If you explain it to them, it just makes them more confident in your work.”

Cliff Lao


WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS

Time is money, which is why Lao charges a diagnostic fee when preparing an estimate.

“We get there, and it’s almost inevitable that while we’re there, it’s not just the shower, but the garbage disposal and the water heater. It ends up being a whole hour,” Lao says. If the client hires Cliff’s Classic Care, Lao subtracts the diagnostic fee from the final bill.

For first-time customers, Lao collects cash, check or money order on the day of service. He is more flexible with established customers and sends them an invoice. This is a practical approach for customers who own a second home in Arizona and don’t live in the state year-round.

When explaining prices to customers, Lao emphasizes the old adage: You get what you pay for. Cliff’s Classic Care Plumbing is fully licensed and insured. It uses name-brand Wolverine Brass parts backed by a lifetime warranty and installed by skilled plumbers dedicated to serving their customers.

“We’re coming into their home to take care of whatever is in need of plumbing,” Lao says. “We’ll take care of it as if it were our own home.” 

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Tracing a Path to Profits

Pulsar 2000 line-tracing technology keeps technicians homed in on the correct pipe, avoiding costly leak-location mistakes *By Ken Wysocky*

Rich Bassoff remembers when tracing copper lines used to be a time-consuming and frustrating process for the technicians at Admiral Plumbing Services in Jupiter, Florida.

But those days are gone, thanks to the Pulsar 2000 line-tracing system, made by Pulsar 2000. Technicians now locate leaks faster and more accurately, which has improved both productivity and profitability for the business, owned by Service Experts.

“We own 10 Pulsar 2000s,” says Bassoff, who established the company in 2004 and now serves as its general manager. The firm’s 28 technicians perform service and repair work for customers in roughly a 30-mile radius around Jupiter, located on Florida’s eastern coast, about 90 miles north of Miami.

“I love the Pulsars,” he says. “We used to energize entire pipe systems to locate leaks, but now we don’t use anything else for line tracing. Every job is different, of course, but I’d say that on average, the Pulsar 2000 cuts in half the time it takes to locate a leak.”

To find leaks, technicians at Admiral Plumbing Services still use their common sense, as well as acoustic leak-detection equipment, in conjunction with the Pulsar 2000. (The company relies on acoustic systems made by SubSurface Leak Detection and Fisher Research Laboratory, a First Texas Products company.) But after the Pulsar 2000 helps them home in on the correct pipe, the acoustic equipment



| | |
|-----------------|--|
| COMPANY | Admiral Plumbing Services, Jupiter, Florida |
| OWNER | Service Experts |
| MACHINE | Pulsar 2000 pipe-tracing, leak-detection equipment |
| FUNCTION | Accurate line tracing of metallic pipes |
| FEATURES | Transmitter inside a compact carrying case, 100 feet of transmitter wire on a reel, hand-held wand, air compressor and brass geophone acoustic-detection sensors |
| COST | About \$1,749 |
| WEBSITE | www.theadmiralplumber.com |

can do its job more effectively, he explains.

“I like to use an interstate highway as an analogy,” Bassoff says. “The Pulsar 2000 keeps our technicians from straying off onto an off-ramp. When you energize all the pipes in a house like we used to, it’s hard to tell which one is the interstate highway and which ones are the bad detours. This basically eliminates those detours.”

MAPPING OUT A PATH

Here’s how it works: Technicians first use acoustic leak-detection equipment to determine the general area where they believe the leak is located. Then they further fine-tune the process by using an air compressor to force air into the

“I love the Pulsars. We used to energize entire pipe systems to locate leaks, but now we don’t use anything else for line tracing.”
Rich Bassoff



▶ Travis Nieves, Admiral Plumbing Services technician, uses Pulsar 2000 pipe-tracing and leak-detection equipment on a job site in Jupiter, Florida. (Photo courtesy of Admiral Plumbing Services)

“When you energize all the pipes in a house like we used to, it’s hard to tell which one is the interstate highway and which ones are the bad detours. This basically eliminates those detours.”

Rich Bassoff

DIFFICULT JOB MADE EASY

When asked to cite a particularly tough job made easier by the Pulsar 2000, Leosis recalls a 36,000-square-foot home in Stuart. The owner’s water bill was \$5,000 a month, so there obviously was a leak. Luckily, the home had two exposed 1 1/4-inch-diameter water services, so Leosis connected one end of the Pulsar system to the outside copper line and one to the cold side of the water heater.

“Then I used the wand to go through the house and find the main,” he says. “That machine really saved our butts. Can you imagine trying to find which wall that main was coming up through in a 36,000-square-foot house? We sure didn’t want to have to open up walls to try to find the leak.”

Some old-fashioned plumbing smarts also remain part of the process. Leosis didn’t find any sign of water leaking inside the house, so he knew it had to be a subsurface leak. (Most homes in Florida don’t have basements, so the pipes are encased in concrete slabs upon which the homes are built.)

“I knew that much water (to generate a \$5,000 monthly water bill) won’t travel through a 1/2-inch line,” he says. “So I knew it would be a mainline, not a 1/2-inch line branching off it. With the wand, I was able to map the entire mainline through the whole house. I used painter’s tape to mark it, then used audio leak-detection equipment to find the leak more finitely.”

Leosis determined the leak was under a pantry floor made from hand-quarried marble tiles affixed to a 12-inch-thick concrete slab. “There’s no margin for error when you’re dealing with a luxury home of that magnitude,” he says, noting how expensive it would’ve been to break open the floor in the wrong spot.

BETTER PRODUCTIVITY, PROFITABILITY

The Pulsar 2000 is easy to learn how to use and has proved to be durable, too. A reasonably competent technician

system; air bubbles escaping through the leak are easier to hear through the acoustic system’s earphones.

If a technician determines that the leak probably is in a cold-water line in a bathroom, for example, he then attaches a clamp to the cold-water outlet on the water heater. A wire at the end of the clamp gets plugged into the Pulsar 2000’s transmitter unit.

Then a 100-foot-long wire mounted on a reel gets plugged into the transmitter on one end and clamped onto the cold-water inlet pipe in the bathroom on the other end, creating a circuit that energizes only the cold-water line from the water heater to that particular bathroom.

“Then we use the Pulsar’s wand to follow that energized copper line,” explains Chris Leosis, service manager. “The wand picks up the signal and keeps us on top of it.”



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could pick it up after using it about 10 times, he estimates.

Periodically, the unit exposes problems that require whole-house repiping projects, which only adds to its value as a revenue generator. But on a daily basis, the primary benefit is helping technicians finish jobs faster, which allows them to make more service calls each year than they otherwise would, Leosis says.

“When you use just leak detection equipment, sounds can get thrown from different distances and throw you off,” he points out. “But when I use the Pulsar 2000, I know without a shadow of a doubt that I’m on top of that line — there’s no interference or sound distortion. That’s critical when you’re digging up the floors in peoples’ living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens — you want to be right the first time.

“I just did a job yesterday where the Pulsar 2000 showed that a line was 2 feet over from where I thought it would be,” he adds. “It’s an invaluable tool every time we use it.” **PI**

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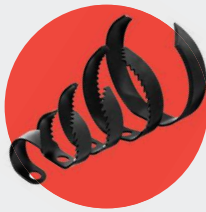
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Nine Signs That Show You're an Exceptional Boss

Remembering these simple traits of great leadership can keep your crew happier and working toward your most important business goals

By Jeff Haden

Many people are good bosses. Some people are great bosses. A handful go even further: They're phenomenal, not only because of what you see them do, but also because of what you don't see them do. If you're a truly phenomenal boss, what your employees see is far from everything they get.

1. You look past the action to understand the motivation.

Sometimes an employee makes a mistake or does the wrong thing. Sometimes an employee jockeys for position, plays political games or ignores company objectives in pursuit of a personal agenda. When that happens, it's easy to assume that person won't listen or doesn't care. But there is almost always a deeper reason: The individual feels stifled, feels he or she has no control, feels marginalized or frustrated — or maybe is just trying to find a sense of meaning in their work. Effective bosses deal with actions. Great bosses search for the underlying issues that, when overcome, lead to a much bigger change for the better.

2. You forgive ... and more important, you forget.

When an employee makes a mistake — especially a major mistake — it's easy to forever view that employee through the perspective of that mistake. I know. I've done it. But one mistake, or one weakness, is just one part of the

Great bosses don't scold or dictate; they work together with an employee to figure out what happened and what to do to correct the mistake.

whole person. Great bosses are able to step back, set aside a mistake and think about the whole employee. If you're a great boss, you can also forget that mistake because you know that viewing any employee through the lens of one incident may forever impact how you treat that employee. To forgive may be divine, but to forget can be even more divine.

3. You place as much importance on employee goals as on organizational goals.

Good bosses inspire their employees to achieve company goals. The best bosses make their employees feel that what they do will benefit them as much as it does the company. After all, for whom will you work harder: a company or yourself? Whether they get professional development, an opportunity to grow or a chance to shine, employees who feel a sense of personal purpose almost always outperform employees who feel a sense of company purpose. If you're a great boss, you know your employees well enough to tap the personal, not just the professional.

4. You support without seeking credit.

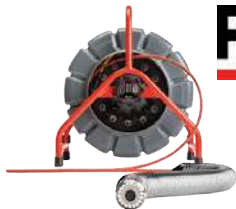
A client gets upset. A supplier feels shortchanged. A colleague gets frustrated. Whatever the issue, good bosses support their employees. They know that to do otherwise undermines the employee's credibility and possibly authority.

Afterward, most bosses will say to the employee, "Listen, I stood up for you, but ..." If you're a great boss, you don't say anything afterward. You feel that supporting your employees — even if that shines a negative spotlight on you — is the right thing to do and is therefore unexceptional.

5. You make fewer public decisions.

When a decision needs to be made, most of the time the best person to make that decision isn't the boss. Most of the

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time, the best person is the employee closest to the issue.

Decisiveness is a quality of a good boss. Great bosses are decisive too, but often in a different way: They decide they aren't the right person to make a decision, and then decide who is the right person.

6. You don't see control as a reward.

Many people desperately want to be the boss so they can finally call the shots. As a great boss, you don't care about control. So your employees don't see you as someone who exercises control. And that's great because you would rather be seen as a person who helps.

7. You let your employees learn their own lessons.

It's easy for a boss to get heavy-handed and turn a teachable moment into a lesson learned. It's a lot harder to let people learn their own lessons, even though the lessons we learn on our own are the lessons we remember forever. Great bosses don't scold or dictate; they work together with an employee to figure out what happened and what to do to correct the mistake. They help find a better way, not a disciplinary way.

8. You let your employees have the ideas.

Years ago, I worked in manufacturing and my boss sent me to help move the production control offices. It was basically manual labor, but for two days it put me in a position

to watch and hear and learn a lot about how the plant's production flow was controlled. I found it fascinating, and later I asked my boss if I could be trained to fill in as a production clerk. Those two days sparked a lifelong interest in productivity and process improvement. Later he admitted he had a larger motive. "I knew you'd go in there with your eyes wide open," he said. "And once you got a little taste, I knew you'd love it."


If you're a great boss, you see the potential in your employees — and you find ways to let them have the ideas.

9. You always go home feeling you could have done a little better.

Leadership is like a smorgasbord of insecurity. You name it, bosses worry about it.

That's why the best leaders go home every day feeling they could have done things a little better or faster or smarter. They wish they had treated employees with a little more sensitivity or empathy. Most important, they go home feeling they could have done more to fulfill the trust their employees place in them.

CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT

And that's why, although other people can't see it, when you walk in the door every day, you make a silent commitment to do your job even better than you did yesterday. Why? Because you're a great boss. 

Inventory Control

Keeping track of parts and tools can make or break a growing business *By Jared Raney*

With anywhere from \$5,000 to upward of \$10,000 in materials, plumbing trucks can all too easily turn into black holes where thousands of dollars disappear.

“Inventory is the bane of many midlevel plumbing shops,” says Dan Hartsough, co-owner of Harts Services in Tacoma, Washington. “There’s a loss of congruency and a lot of overspending when you don’t monitor really well. And that’s where profits go. Where are profits spent? They’re tied up in inventory for many companies.”

Plumbers with established practices have said that inventory management is one of the most difficult processes their companies have undertaken. But with a methodical approach and the right preparation, you can avoid many of those headaches.

“The most difficult part of starting an inventory system is knowing how, where or when to begin,” says Kelli Frank, co-owner of Four Star Plumbing in San Clemente, California. “It’s overwhelming, for sure.”

LEVELS OF INVENTORY

There are unlimited ways to customize your inventory management, but all fall into one of a few categories.

Most plumbing operations can get away with buying job by job, as needed from the nearest supply house. That method becomes problematic in a drastic way when

a company starts to grow. Inventory issues are compounded with every truck added to the fleet.

“When you start getting five, six, 10-plus trucks, that becomes a major issue,” Hartsough says. “You just end up accumulating inventory. And it’s not consistent, so you’re putting different products into different people’s houses, rather than deciding as a company what we’re going to use.”

Once a company has decided to implement a real strategy, there are a few directions to go:

- “Just-in-time” inventory. This is purely truck replenishment in the shop, ordering parts as needed with no standing inventory or warehouse.

“Inventory is the bane of many midlevel plumbing shops. There’s a loss of congruency and a lot of overspending when you don’t monitor really well.”

Dan Hartsough



- The next step up is a warehouse inventory, and there are essentially two versions:
 - Self-stocked, where you're buying parts and materials and stocking it yourself.
 - Consignment, where the vendor owns the materials in the warehouse.

Hartsough operates a consignment shop, which means that his company doesn't own the stock in their warehouse and doesn't pay for any materials until they are put onto one of its 14 trucks.

There is a natural progression to inventory, often ramping up to consignment shops or even the next step up — vendor-managed inventory. In these systems, often reserved for \$20 million-plus operations, a supplier will actually build their own warehouse in or near the plumber's shop. An employee of the vendor company, not the plumbing company, operates the warehouse.

"When we hit four or five trucks out in the field, we realized we needed to do something else," Hartsough says. "We stripped down all the trucks and realized we had up to \$5,000 worth of random parts on every single truck."

After they decided to make the leap to a managed inventory, they spoke with other area plumbers and even got in touch with some best-practice groups to explore their options.

"It's easy to keep good inventory when you have one truck and or when you are the only one touching the materials. Adding trucks and employees is where things become more complicated."

Kelli Frank

Today they have a consigned inventory through Barnett and a local vendor, with ServiceTitan software for parts tracking.

"We have all our parts in ServiceTitan, so when a guy does a job, we basically have a website where they go through the different categories — like you would on Amazon or something like that — and they add parts to their job," Hartsough says.

They also have a full-time inventory manager and restock trucks daily, with a full inventory evaluation quarterly.

GETTING STARTED

"It's such a large task for any new contractor," Frank says. "We were in the business for 15 years before we started operating multiple vehicles. That is when we realized we needed to have more control over our truck stock and material costs."

Instead of diving whole-hog into the rough terrain of inventory management, there are things you can do to get your shop, trucks and technicians ready for a transition, without committing to an overhaul.

"It's easy to keep good inventory when you have one truck and or when you are the only one touching the materials," Frank says. "Adding trucks and employees is where things become more complicated."

Focusing on getting your trucks organized before even trying to catalog the parts will make everything easier when the time does come to make the jump.

"Being neat and organized doesn't mean you have good inventory control, but it's a great place to start," Frank says. "My tip is this: Have a well-organized shop and truck to optimize your work time and understand the most needed materials — what you need to stock, what you can purchase in bulk — all while keeping the trucks lean."



◀ Robert Frank, owner of Four Star Plumbing in California, is pictured with one of his company's service trucks stocked with supplies. To help with organization and inventory tracking, the company uses trays to store parts and tools.


Another cost saving with inventory management is that once you start developing a standardized stock, you can buy parts in bulk, saving money compared to buying piecemeal.

Once you have a handle on keeping your materials and products organized, it might be worth creating your ideal inventory system from scratch. Organize materials and vendors, categorize them, take photos and keep track of purchase date, price and quantity.

“In the beginning, we did a lot of manual inventory — pieces of paper and handwritten notes. It didn’t give us much accuracy, much inventory control, but it did at least allow us to see the flow of what materials we used more than others — what we needed to reorder,” Frank says. “It was archaic, but it was a step in the right direction.

“This type of system does not require you to purchase an expensive software or cloud-based application,” she says. “It will lead the way for when you are ready to begin shopping for the right inventory program for you and your business.”

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Most important is deciding exactly what you want to get out of your inventory management.

“Be able to identify what your No. 1 goal is: Are you just trying to figure out how much money you have on the truck? Are you trying to figure out what the easiest way is to have parts added to jobs? Are you trying to keep control over all the inventory and ensure that the trucks aren’t being pilfered by employees, or customers for that matter?” Frank says. “Find out what your No. 1 agenda is, what your goal is, and then start with one vehicle.”

After you’ve determined your goals, you can start making basic, ground-level decisions about the direction of your shop.


“Once you get to a certain size, the first step would be: Do you stock your trucks, or do you not stock your trucks?” Hartsough says. “The disadvantages of not stocking your truck are (a.) you end up with a bunch of random inventory in those trucks and (b.) techs end up having to go to the supply house for every single job.”

IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

Whatever system you choose, know that you’re committing you and your team to a long and often arduous process.

“It took us the better part of 10 years to actually get to where we are right now with inventory,” Frank says. “There’s no system out there that tells you how to integrate your business practices and your application with that system.”

But if you can brave the journey, a strong inventory can be a catalyst for growth in the plumbing industry.

“Inventory management is critical to the bottom line of a business,” Frank says. “After all, you lose money every time you need to leave a job site to pick up something that you thought you had or forgot to order or, for that matter, when you can’t find something because your truck is unorganized.” 

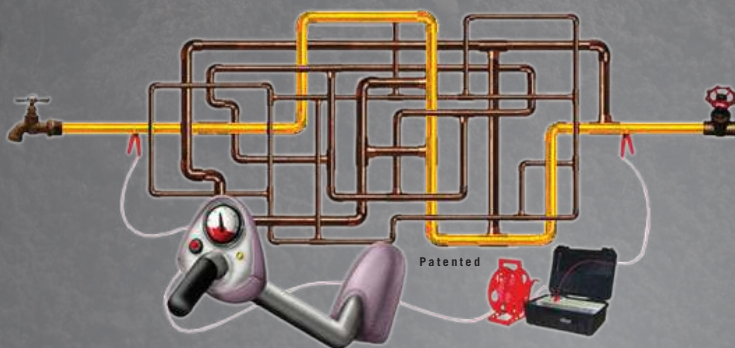


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Service Vans, Fleet Management, Franchises and Software

By Craig Mandli

GPS/Fleet Tracking

ClearPathGPS

ClearPathGPS has gone mobile-first with its telematics solution so that business owners can have data at their fingertips — from fleet vehicle location, breadcrumb trails and real-time vehicle behavior to geozone and virtual timecard reports — whether the user is behind the desk or in the field. Every subscription comes with an unlimited number of platform users and includes native iPhone and Android app options, along with a traditional web-based solution for tracking and reporting. It integrates with ServiceTitan and has an OpenAPI to pull GPS tracking data into other back-office systems. **888-734-0384; www.clearpathgps.com.**



NexTraq software

NexTraq software provides driver assignments that keep track of who is driving a vehicle on any given day. It can help optimize daily planning, helping drivers accomplish more during the day, and provide fleet tracking to find the location of a single vehicle or the entire fleet, according to the company. Mapping and geofence service creates locations and zones with simplified 32-point geofencing. Sensors and asset tracking allow operators to know when a driver uses a lift or an asset has been moved. Behavior tracking can help correct poor driver habits with the tools needed to coach the team. It also helps automate maintenance schedules and gives alerts when repairs are due. Driver accountability can be increased with external- and internal-facing cameras. It can also help simplify electronic logging device compliance, operations and fuel management. **888-251-6401; www.nextraq.com.**



Quartix vehicle tracking system

The Quartix vehicle tracking system helps a wide range of businesses improve productivity, cut costs and save on fuel every day. Providing commercial fleet tracking for trucks, coaches, vans and cars throughout the U.S., U.K. and France, the system offers a host of features for fleet managers. It helps analyze data, generating simple-to-use reports that can be accessed online. Live tracking, driver time sheets, geofencing and management dashboards allow managers to easily see where efficiencies can be made. Driver League Tables and individual driver reports help to assess driving style, which if improved can save businesses up to 25% in fuel consumption, as well as positively impact the safety of road users. It offers tiered packages to help businesses identify their best drivers, make sense of mileage and fuel costs, and reduce administrative tasks. **312-800-9882; www.quartix.com.**



US Fleet Tracking AT-V4

The AT-V44G LTE tracking device from US Fleet Tracking has a compact, sleek design that fits in just about any space on a vehicle or asset. After a simple install, it can help uncover crucial data about vehicles and assets. It provides access to a vehicle's location, speed and mileage from a desktop or mobile device, helping increase the number of daily service calls, according to the company. Its alerting feature helps users know when vehicles have entered or exited a specific location such as a client's home or office. Toggle on the live weather and traffic information to get a robust picture of what a team encounters on the streets. It can help provide realistic arrival times for clients. **405-726-9900; www.usfleettracking.com.**



Business Software

My Service Depot Smart Service

The **Smart Service** software system from My Service Depot functions as a direct add-on to QuickBooks, adding scheduling, dispatching, invoicing and customer management. It offers real-time integration with QuickBooks Pro, Premier, Enterprise and Online, allowing users to schedule and dispatch work to their customer base regardless of their preferred QuickBooks platform. It allows field service companies to streamline their operations and eliminate waste by automating much of the standard job process. When a customer calls, an office dispatcher will create a job in the scheduler, filling in job notes and assigning the work to a field technician. Once they finish, the job gets sent out electronically to the corresponding technician's phone or tablet. When that tech arrives at the customer's location, they'll build a digital work order, collect a customer signature and send the completed paperwork back to the office for invoicing. **888-518-0818; www.myservicedepot.com.**



ServiceCore software

ServiceCore software is a QuickBooks-compatible, all-in-one software solution custom-built for companies in the liquid waste industry. Through route optimization, scheduling, customer management, accounting and other fundamental features, it is designed to help companies better manage their schedules, customers and inventory. **844-336-0611; www.servicecore.com.**



SimPRO Software Enterprise

Enterprise from **simPRO Software** is an end-to-end, cloud-based solution that minimizes administrative time and optimizes workflows through the use of various

service management, project management, inventory and maintenance tools. It is built for any business and is compatible with simTRAC, which allows users to understand where costs are being spent in the field. The detailed reports, driver identification, geofencing and maintenance planner mean the user can ensure their fleet is meeting expectations. This fleet management software monitors the location of vehicles in real time and enables users to reduce costs, schedule smarter and enhance driver safety. **855-338-6041; www.simpro.us.**

Franchises

Rooter-Man

A **Rooter-Man** franchise offers a flat-rate pricing system (no royalty on percentage of sales). Franchisees are granted an exclusive franchise license for their chosen territories and become part of a team of independent dealers working together under a nationally branded website and recognized trademark, with proven systems for success. Franchisees receive equity in the national brand by receiving exclusive use of the Rooter-Man trademark in their territory. The ownership of the trademark in a territory can be an appreciating investment, which may later be sold or expanded in the future. **800-700-8062; www.rooterman.com.**



Zoom Drain Franchise

Zoom Drain Franchise pulls from a larger pool of willing and capable people because they don't need skilled techs. Their "green" apprentices practice in training centers, on trucks and in the field with techs, using comprehensive digital manuals as the training curriculum. Graduating from apprentice to tech is the first step on a career path. The manuals match the specialized configuration of the trucks. The software, tools, equipment and materials are specifically referenced in the procedures and systematically updated on tablets. **877-855-5100; www.zoomdrain.com.**



Shelving



Milwaukee Tool PACKOUT Mounting Plate

The PACKOUT Mounting Plate from Milwaukee

Tool provides users the ability to stabilize and secure their PACKOUT Storage in the shop or in a vehicle. Like the dolly, the mounting plate is constructed with impact-resistant polymer and has metal-reinforced mounting and tie-down points that allow it to support and secure 100 pounds of weight on the floor and 50 pounds on the wall. 800-729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com.

Ranger Design shelving

Ranger Design shelving provides tradesmen with a sturdy and customizable workspace in order to simplify their job. The durable and rattle-free shelves will allow for better organization and efficiency during a day at work, increasing productivity. Featuring eye-catching black end-panels, the steel shelving is created with aluminum extrusions to increase a vehicle's payload. The shelf trays are built from marine-grade plywood with a dynamic load capacity of over 250 pounds in order to carry a cargo of any size. It is also available in aluminum for an increase in payload. 800-565-5321; www.rangerdesign.com.



Trailer

Air-Tow Trailers enclosed trailer

Enclosed trailers from Air-Tow Trailers are available in 12-, 14- and 16-foot models with carrying capacities up to 10,000 pounds. A 92-inch door height makes these trailers large enough to accommodate large equipment such as scissor lifts and forklifts. Enclosed units are equipped with ground loading technology that allows for easy and safe loading of all types of equipment in any environment. A weatherproof aluminum shell keeps equipment out of the elements and provides a secure location for storage at the job site. Enclosed units come with many



customizable options such as swinging doors with a three-point camlock or a self-locking rollup door and a plywood interior lining option for added insulation. E-tracks, vents, rubber bumpers, access doors and many other accessories can be customized. 800-479-7975; www.airtow.com.


Van/Box Truck

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America Supreme Spartan

The 12-foot Supreme Spartan service body from Isuzu Commercial Truck of America is available for 109-inch-wheelbase NPR and NPR-HD models. Standard features include eight compartments with adjustable shelving for more cargo-organizing versatility and a spacious stand-up height interior with a standard street-side pipe door. Stainless steel D-ring compartment handles offer easier gripping with work gloves, and it offers two interior LED dome lights. 866-441-9638; www.isuzucv.com.



Pipe Lining Supply MICROSHOP

The compact MICROSHOP from Pipe Lining Supply is a fully customizable drain cleaning, coating and lateral lining service vehicle that is completely customizable to best suit individual needs. It is available as a plain white mobile unit or can be custom wrapped, and is suitable for plumbers, excavators or drain cleaning contractors. The vehicle can be fitted with cured-in-place-pipe equipment such as Quik-Shot or Quik-Coating equipment for drain, waste and vent pipe. A smaller-footprint version of the Quik-Roller has convenient shelving below the roller table for additional storage. The van/truck/trailer is also set up with power, compressed air and side hooks. 888-354-6464; www.pipeliningssupply.com. 

Service Vans, Fleet Management, Franchises and Software

By Craig Mandli

Automated follow-up system facilitates growth for third-generation service business



Problem: Rich and Caleb Martinez, father-son team and owners of Leonard & Sons Building Service, an Algonquin, Illinois-based third-generation service business, reached the point where they wanted to grow their business but didn't have time to go after more opportunities or take on more work individually. They decided to approach growth differently by turning existing high-dollar open estimates into closed jobs and freeing themselves from administrative sales tasks so they could focus on work they could charge a premium for. Having tried manual follow-up methods and large, complicated business automation software systems, nothing seemed to be affordable and effective.

Solution: The Martinezes decided to give **Closing Commander** a try because it fit with their budget and requirements, as it was easy to add the simple step to their in-field sales process. It was also easy to monitor the email opens, clicks and replies. Their customers appreciated the consistent communication, which made them seem like a much bigger, more polished company with world-class customer service.

Result: In the first seven months, Closing Commander helped lead the company to over a \$250,000 of additional business. "It's a big timesaver because the system allows us to focus on new opportunities coming in while it keeps in contact with estimates already sent out," Rich Martinez says. 833-257-2637; www.closingcommander.com.

Tracking program helps company save on overtime and fuel costs



Problem: Rub-A-Dub Plumbing offers plumbing and septic services throughout East Texas. The company was having a difficult time locating where technicians were at any given time throughout the day. The issue affected many areas of the business, the largest of them being overtime hours claimed, as each technician averaged 15 hours' overtime each week. Also, since they couldn't effectively dispatch techs to customer sites, they took inefficient routes and unnecessary stops throughout the day, resulting in high fuel costs.

Solution: **GPS Insight** keyed in on these challenges and delivered a solution designed to decrease overtime costs, reduce fuel costs and increase driver accountability.

Result: After implementing GPS Insight, Rub-A-Dub Plumbing's average time worked of 55 hours per week per technician dropped to 47 hours, equating to an 18% decrease in overtime hours claimed in the first month. Because of the integration between ServiceTitan and GPS Insight, they can verify if a tech clocked out at the last job or at home. They were also able to decrease fuel costs and save over \$400 on their fuel bill alone in the first month by putting an end to unnecessary stops made by the drivers and reducing overall miles driven. "GPS Insight has given us the ability to reduce costs, which put a few precious points back to the bottom line," says Ginny Rivers, administrative manager, Rub-A-Dub Plumbing. "Everyone needs that!" 866-477-4321; www.gpsinsight.com.

Product Spotlight

Sleek home monitoring system CSION is a smart option for homeowners

By Jared Raney

SJE has ventured into the smart home market via its CSI Controls trademark, offering the CSION switch-contact alarm system with Wi-Fi option.

“The CSION is a flexible and convenient alarm system for detecting and reporting alarm conditions in the home,” says John Desmond, product manager with SJE. “The alarms have an attractive, modern design that fits in well with smart home products.”

With two separate alarm inputs, the physical system provides auditory and visual alarms. A horn and different-colored LED ring lights provide clear alarm differentiation and notification.

“The CSION alarms provide two contact-closure-type inputs for a range of possible alarm sensors, usually shipping with a float switch for use as a sump alarm,” Desmond says. “While the most obvious application is as a sump alarm, any kind of alarm sensor that closes a switch contact will work with the CSIONs. This includes input from auxiliary alarm contacts from outdoor control panels such as for septic, lighting and water feature systems.”

In addition to the localized device alarm, the Wi-Fi version of the product sends text and email messages using custom alarm names, with clear information on alarm conditions through tablet or smartphone setup.



“Other products similar to the CSION Wi-Fi use the cellular network to connect to the internet, but these require the homeowner to pay a monthly subscription fee,” Desmond says. “No fees are required for the CSION alarms.”

Another feature is an internal low-temperature alarm that operates at 40 degrees F to protect against pipe freezing.

“We are from Minnesota, so we know more than we would like about that kind of problem,” Desmond says.

For scenarios where pipe freezing isn't a concern, the low-temp alarm does have the option to be disabled,

in order to avoid false alarms in colder regions.

With low-voltage power supplied by a micro-USB input, and a rechargeable battery in the Wi-Fi version, both alarms have battery backups. The Wi-Fi system will alert users to AC power failure and restoration, low battery and internet connectivity loss.

“This product line is CSI Controls' first entry into the smart home market, with a clean, modern industrial design,” Desmond says. “We hope to follow up with more products for this market in the future.” 800-363-5842; www.csicontrols.com.

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Brasscraft Cobra Skinny Snake drain auger

The Cobra Skinny Snake by Cobra Tools, a Brasscraft brand, is a drain auger that features a strong polymer constructed housing. It is manually operated with a 10-foot-long, 1/8-inch-diameter, high-carbon wire cable that stores neatly in the housing. The Skinny Snake is easy to operate by manually rotating the housing using the handle or finger grip and will clear minor clogs in sinks and tubs without removing the strainer or pop-up. **877-272-7755; www.cobratools.com.**



Milwaukee Tool PLUS-LOK SDS-Plus extensions

The PLUS-LOK SDS-Plus extensions from Milwaukee Tool can be used for extended reach and deep hole drilling and are universal with all SDS-Plus rotary hammers and accessories, including drill bits, chisels, core bits and rebar cutters. The extensions easily lock into the bit for a tool-free connection, providing the reach necessary to drill the hole in the desired location without the need for long drill bits. Each extension also outlasts several drill bits and is built to withstand aggressive applications such as side-loading or drilling through rebar in concrete. **800-729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com.**

Picote Solutions Mini Cleaner

The Mini Cleaner from Picote Solutions is a high-speed pipeline cleaning system aimed at the domestic drainage and plumbing markets. The unit has a flexible two-part shaft with a rotating inner core where the cleaning heads are attached. The stationary outer casing ensures the operator's hands do not make contact with rotating parts during the cleaning operation, improving safety and flexibility. The outer casing is also durable, flame, abrasion and chemically resistant with a high continuous service temperature. The whole unit weighs in at 58 pounds so it can be easily transported. The Mini Cleaner also has the flexibility to handle multiple 90-degree bends, even in the smaller-diameter pipes. **219-440-1404; www.picotesolutions.com.**



Water Cannon wet sandblasting kit

The wet sandblasting kit from Water Cannon Inc. - MWBE is designed to remove unwanted surface contamination such as rust, scale, loose paint, barnacles and debris. The sand and high-pressure water work together using venturi siphon technology to more safely clean metals, concrete and other similar surfaces. The kit quick-connects to the end of a commercial pressure washer wand and works on 3,000 to 6,000 psi systems. It automatically draws sand through a 26-foot, reinforced, lightweight feed hose using an engineered self-venting pickup tube. The venturi siphon technology eliminates the need for an air feed system or other heavy and bulky equipment. **800-333-9274; www.watercannon.com.**

CUES LOCK no-dig sewer rehabilitation product line

CUES LOCK includes structural point repair systems designed to be used for stand-alone spot repairs or to enhance quality and simplicity of cured-in-place relining. The LOCK products are easy to install and require very little equipment, and most repairs can be carried out in live sewer operating conditions. It does not require digging or external point repair. The line includes stents to bridge holes, voids, cracks and weakened/broken sections in pipes; structural and sealer sleeves to restore damaged areas to full structural strength and seals infiltration; and end sealers to seal the annular space between the CIPP liner and the host pipe at the pipe ends. **800-327-7791; www.cuesinc.com.**



Koul Tools 409B EZ-ON hose press

Koul Tools' lighter and more efficient 409B EZ-ON hose press features thrust and ball bearings for smoother operation, a new drive screw and larger nut for improved performance, and a traveling carriage with sealed bearings that rolls on a track for better stability. The hose press installs both straight and angled fittings from 1/4- to 1-inch sizes in seconds. It utilizes a stationary vise to secure the fitting and a travelling carriage to clamp the hose. The hose is installed by turning the drive screw with a ratchet or impact gun. **928-854-6706; www.koultools.com.**

**HoldRite (RWC)
HydroFlame firestop
and acoustic sealants**

The HoldRite (RWC) HydroFlame firestop product line includes firestop and acoustic sealants, intumescent wrap strips, pipe collars and putty pads and offers HoldRite users a complete, one-source sleeving and firestop solution for new and retrofit construction. The new firestop and acoustic sealant line complements HoldRite's HydroFlame Pro Cast-in-Place Firestop, which has a telescoping design that can extend to any deck depth required. The new line of sealant products provides flame, gas and liquid intrusion protection for a wide variety of wall and floor penetrations. **800-321-0316; www.holdrite.com.**



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Industry News To Us!*

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Plumber

Sept. 11-13

World Plumbing Conference, Melbourne Convention Centre, South Wharf, Australia. Visit www.worldplumbingconference.com

Sept. 22-26

IAPMO and ASSE Annual Education and Business Conference, Silver Legacy hotel, Reno, Nevada. Visit www.iapmo.org

Oct. 2-4

Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Connect 2019, The Westin Indianapolis, Indianapolis. Visit www.phccweb.org

Oct. 16-18

Service World Expo, Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas. Visit www.serviceworldexpo.com

Oct. 24-27

American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE) Technical Symposium, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown, Pittsburgh. Visit www.aspe.org

Nov. 4-7

Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) Conference, The Don CeSar hotel, St. Petersburg, Florida. Visit www.safeplumbing.org

Jan. 21-23

National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) International Builders' Show, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas. Visit www.buildersshow.com **P**

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Pipe Lining Supply celebrates 15th anniversary

Pipe Lining Supply is celebrating its 15th anniversary. The company was founded on Jan. 1, 2004, by Linda Heisler. Her primary focus was the cured-in-place-pipe industry in the California area. Two years later, her husband, John Heisler, joined the company, bringing expansive knowledge of the industry including CIPP lateral lining, pipe bursting, horizontal directional drilling, pipe coating, sewage lining, open-cut and cover, and water and sewer utility work. In 2017, the company introduced its AIPPR Quik-Coating System, designed for drain, waste and vent piping. The company has also expanded its market nationwide, and its team includes technical experts across the U.S.

Zoom Drain Franchise adds California location


Zoom Drain Franchise added its 13th franchise location, this time in Orange County, California. The new franchise will be run by Sean and Amy Hunt. Amy is currently serving on active duty with the U.S. Navy, while Sean is a Navy veteran. Between them, they have more than 30 years' naval experience.

Additional Zoom Drain locations include Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Norristown and Allentown/Bethlehem); Long Island, New York; Portland, Maine; New Jersey; Salt Lake City; Seattle; Omaha, Nebraska; Baltimore; and central Florida.

Uponor and Belkin invest to grow joint venture company, Phyn

Uponor and Belkin have decided to invest an additional \$12 million, \$6 million each, into their joint venture company, Phyn, in 2019. The new investment will be used for ongoing research and product development for smart water solutions, as well as continuing efforts to grow in the North American and European markets.

Midland Industries announces new sales managers

Midland Industries announced that both Melissa Coolidge and Todd Evans have joined the company as national sales managers for the plumbing/PVF (pipes, valves and fittings) market and waterworks and irrigation market, respectively. Coolidge and Evans were formerly with Matco-Norca where they both led sales efforts in their respective disciplines. Coolidge is headquartered near Charlotte, North Carolina, and Evans near Houston. 

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- Plumbing/Heating/Cooling Rehabilitation/Relining/Bursting
 Sewer/Drain Cleaning Dealer/Distributor/Manufacturer
 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?

- 1-3 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?

- 1-10,000 10,001-50,000 50,001-100,000
 100,001-200,000 200,001-500,000 500,001+

WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL EQUIPMENT BUDGET?

- \$1-\$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
 New Construction - Commercial Pipe Bursting
 New Construction - Residential HVAC TV Inspection
 Location/Leak Detection Septic System Installation
 Septic Tank Pumping Other _____

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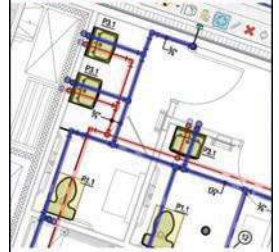
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