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Competitive **ADVANTAGE**

An investment in equipment allows Ohio company to become a one-stop shop for customers
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BOOST TO PROFITS
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TIPS TO AVOIDING
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On the ROAD

Betting on an Extreme Makeover

A more uniform approach to branding helped Las Vegas plumbing company hit the marketing jackpot.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Duane Goodpaster, co-owner of All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair, at a drain cleaning job at Fire Station 81 in Middletown, Ohio. Goodpaster, and his wife, Tonna Goodpaster, started the company in 2001. The company, with three employees, offers services such as drain cleaning, trenchless pipeline rehab, and service and repair plumbing in an area 50 miles around Middletown. (Photography by Amy Voigt)

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Plumber

Exclusively serving plumbing contractors and franchisees

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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CONTROLLED CIRCULATION: 22,000 per month
This figure includes both U.S. and international distribution.

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Chris and Emily Cunningham have been running their business, Service Plus, since 2002. They used to work endless hours, struggled to hire good people, and weren't making money. They almost shut down. But in the last 5 years, they've hit their stride, leading their 40+ employees to a 2019 revenue of \$6.6M with 11% net profit.

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Cory Dellenbach

Building a Reputation

Customer service plays a huge part in what type of reputation your plumbing company develops

W

e all have those busy times of year when your schedule is jampacked and you can barely keep your head on straight. How do you and your staff handle stress from being busy?

I saw this stress handled in two different ways recently. In one case, the person answering the phone for the company was pleasant, explained the company was quite busy, but was more than happy to add it to the schedule. The operator explained it may be a few days, weeks or more, but they would keep me updated along the way.

In the other call, an operator answered, conveyed clearly in their voice that they were stressed, was quick to note how busy the company was, said they couldn't get anyone out for several months, and hung up.

How employees handle the stress of the busy season can make or break a company.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Whether you answer the phone yourself or have someone on staff do it, that person needs to be pleasant, able to handle stress and knowledgeable about the services provided.

Without those three things, it could welcome bad reviews, deter customer referrals or, worst, bring loss of revenue.

Ensure you have the right person answering the phone. If you know you get stressed and show it on the outside, maybe hand the phone over to your spouse or hire someone who can be levelheaded and help your company not scare away customers.

KEEPING THE REPUTATION

Having that cool-headed person taking the calls and working with customers will help build your company's reputation. The customer will understand you are busy and work with you — as long as it's not a big emergency — because they've heard good things about your company.

It can be hard work to build and maintain a good reputation. You need to put in the effort to make it happen and to make sure you have the right employees and are teaching them how you want things done.

Reputation seems to be a theme in this issue. Anja Smith talks about how important online reviews are to plumbing companies in the Industry Insider feature. How do you entice your customers to leave those valuable reviews on Yelp, Google, Angie's List or other similar services? It's important to start getting your staff trained to ask customers to complete reviews.

In our profile on All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing in Middletown, Ohio, Duane Goodpaster has built a strong reputation for his company. Customers know the company can be a one-stop shop so they don't have to reach out to multiple contractors.

Take a look at your company and determine if you can add services that customers have been begging you for to make it easier on them. Adding services will help you secure customers for even longer because they won't have a reason to keep looking for other contractors.

HARD WORK AHEAD

It can be hard work to build and maintain a good reputation. You need to put in the effort to make it happen and to make sure you have the right employees and are teaching them how you want things done.

How are you building your company's reputation? Do you have tips for our readers? You can email me at editor@plumbermag.com or call 715-350-8346.

Enjoy this issue! 



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OPPORTUNITY

Take Advantage of Uptick in Home Renovations

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased downtime for homeowners, and many are using that time to take on remodeling projects that have long been on the to-do list. This online exclusive takes a look at ways that you can turn this trend into work for your company.

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VEHICLE INSURANCE

Plumbers Affected By Ballooning Premiums

It's becoming more difficult for contractors to get competitive rates on commercial auto policies as insurance companies have taken steps to reduce their exposure or stopped offering such policies altogether. This online exclusive takes a closer look at the issue. ▲ plumbermag.com/featured



OVERHEARD ONLINE

"The more communication, the better. In the absence of communication, family members will have expectations that may be unrealistic and can lead to disharmony and litigation. When everyone knows the plan, some may not be happy, but no one is surprised."

— 7 Steps for Creating a Smart Succession Plan

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SUPER FLUSH

Plumbing System at New NFL Stadium Passes Key Test

How do you know if a stadium's plumbing system will be able to handle a crowd of 70,000? Put it through a rigorous test of all sink faucets running and all toilets and urinals being flushed at the same time. That was recently done for the Raiders' new stadium in Las Vegas. Read more and check out a video of it here.

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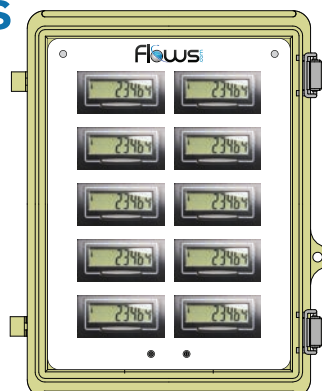
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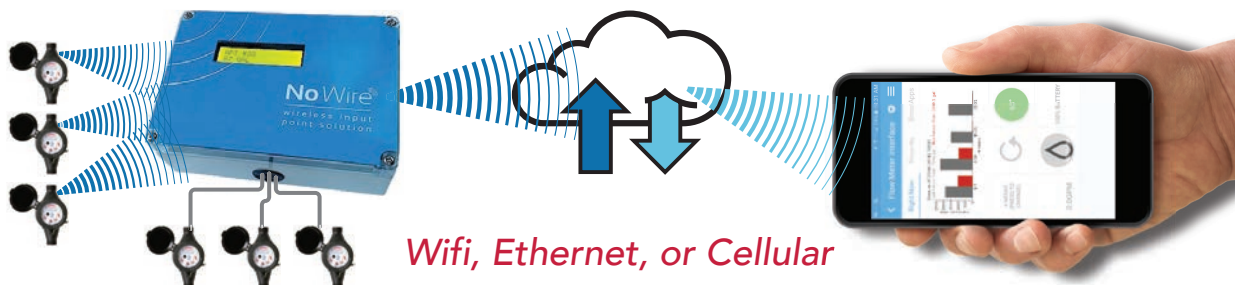


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➤ Duane Goodpaster, co-owner of All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair, left, and co-owner Tonna Goodpaster, center, and technician Luke Brongersma, right, at the home office in Middletown, Ohio.



Competitive ADVANTAGE

An investment in equipment allows Ohio company to become a one-stop shop for customers

By Ken Wysocky | Photography by Amy Voigt



All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair LLC, Middletown, Ohio

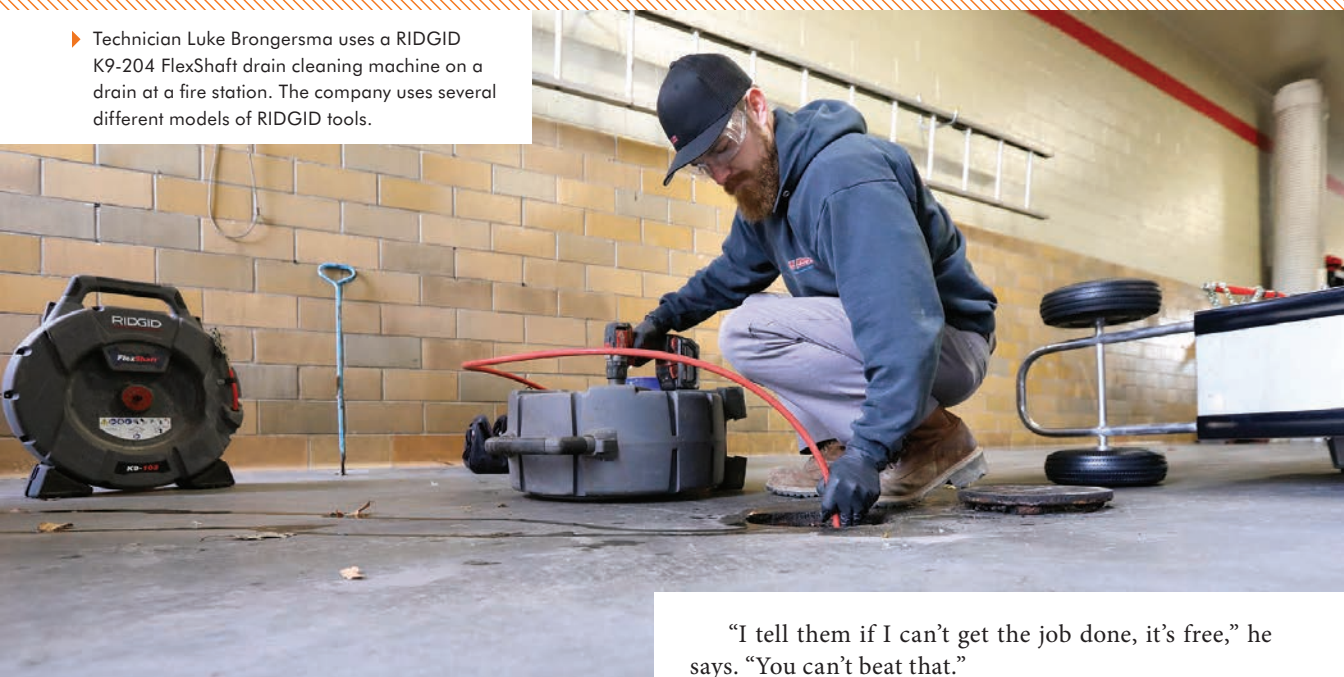
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▶ Technician Luke Brongersma uses a RIDGID K9-204 FlexShaft drain cleaning machine on a drain at a fire station. The company uses several different models of RIDGID tools.



“I tell them if I can’t get the job done, it’s free,” he says. “You can’t beat that.”

A recent residential pipeline rehab project completed by All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair vividly illustrates the southwestern Ohio-based company’s recipe for growth since its inception in 2001.

The project involved fixing roughly 50 feet of damaged 6-inch-diameter clay sewer pipe that ran under a busy four-lane road. Digging up the road to replace the approximately 15-foot-deep line, which was the homeowner’s responsibility to repair, would’ve cost upward of \$75,000, says Duane Goodpaster, who owns the company with his wife, Tonna Goodpaster.

But All Drains stepped in and cleaned out the line with a drain machine, flushed the debris with a Warrior trailer jetter from Spartan Tool, inspected it and then rehabbed the pipe with a Trelleborg Pipe Seals cured-in-place liner.

“They all work together,” says Duane Goodpaster, 47, while talking about the competitive advantages of being a one-stop shop for customers, with no need to hire subcontractors to do work he can’t perform. “You need to own the right tools to do the job. You can’t just go in and fix everything with an old cable machine, which is what we started out with years ago. You’re only as good as your tools and equipment.”

Owning a full complement of technology also offers another benefit: Goodpaster is often hired as a subcontractor by other area plumbers, drain cleaners, maintenance crews and the like.

Investing in advanced, reliable equipment also provides another competitive advantage: The confidence to offer an ironclad guarantee to customers who are a bit nervous about spending substantial amounts of money to get sewer lines unclogged.

ESTABLISHING THE COMPANY

Goodpaster got into drain cleaning after working for several years for another contractor. “I wasn’t happy working there, but I really liked the service end,” he says. “I liked the freedom of making service calls — getting jobs done. Eventually I wanted to start my own business.”

So he established All Drains in 2001 in Middletown, which is about halfway between Dayton and Cincinnati. His equipment consisted of a used cable drain machine and a used cargo van.

The company derives 30% of its revenue from plumbing service and repair work, while the rest is drain cleaning and pipeline rehab.

To get that work done, Goodpaster has built up the company’s equipment list to include three Spartan 300 drum cable machines; two RIDGID SeeSnake pipeline inspection cameras (one standard model and one Mini model); four RIDGID FlexShaft drain machines (two K9-102s and two K9-204s); three Flex Shaft drain machines made by Clog Squad; a Spartan Warrior; and two RIDGID NaviTrack Scout pipeline locators.

“You need to own the right tools to do the job. You can’t just go in and fix everything with an old cable machine, which is what we started out with years ago. You’re only as good as your tools and equipment.”

Duane Goodpaster



“There’s a lot of gratification in knowing you’re helping people every day — that we can show up with the right equipment, do a good job and make their day better.”

Duane Goodpaster

For service vehicles, the company relies on three Chevrolet 3500s outfitted with 12-foot Spartan box bodies made by Supreme and a Ford F-350. The three Chevrolets are equipped with 2,000-pound-capacity winches made by Champion Power Equipment. The company also owns a trailer, made by Diamond C Trailer and used to carry pipe lining equipment and materials, as well as a skid loader and a mini-excavator, both made by Caterpillar.



◀ Duane Goodpaster, co-owner of All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair, uses a RIDGID K9-102 FlexShaft drain cleaning machine to clean a drain in one of the bathrooms at Fire Station 81 in Middletown, Ohio. The company, with three employees, offers services such as drain cleaning, trenchless pipeline rehab, and service and repair plumbing in an area 50 miles around Middletown.

MORE THAN CLEARING DRAINS

While the drain cleaning work accounts for most of the company’s revenue, Goodpaster doesn’t shy away from doing the regular plumbing work.

The company will service all regular plumbing fixtures such as kitchen and bathroom sinks, bathtub drains, toilets, garbage disposals, water heaters and frozen waterlines in the winter.

One of the things Goodpaster likes best about his work is the daily opportunity to both solve problems and help people. “There’s a lot of gratification in knowing you’re helping people every day — that we can show up with the right equipment, do a good job and make their day better,” he says.

“The problem-solving is a big part of it as well. Since we’ve been doing this for so many years and we have the right equipment, it’s often not as much of a challenge these days — we’re just really good at this. In fact, our biggest challenge is getting homeowners to let us do what needs

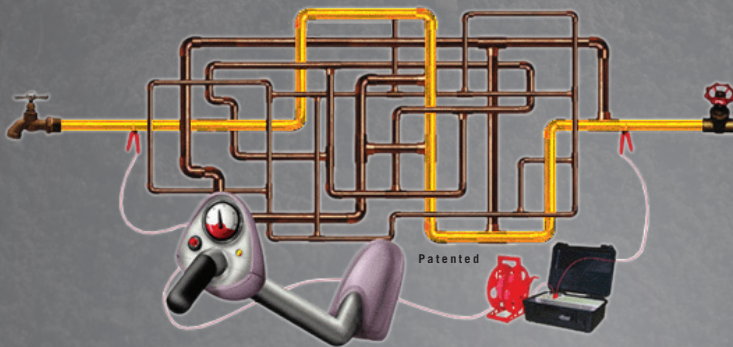


▲ Here's one of several clogged drains Duane Goodpaster, co-owner of All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair, is cleaning.

◀ Goodpaster operates the remote control to use a 2019 Spartan Tool Warrior sewer jetter to clean a drain at the firehouse in Middletown, Ohio.

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to be done, especially if previous contractors have failed. That's where our guarantee comes into play."

TRENCHLESS PIPE REHAB

The pipe lining system from Sactools represents the company's most significant technology investment. Sactools is a brand owned by Sweden-based Sacpro AB.

"I found out about Sactools at the last WWETT Show," Goodpaster says. He bought the installation equipment from Clog Squad, a Michigan-based drain cleaning company that also sells and develops equipment. The company is also the North American distributor for Sactools.

The Trelleborg liner the company uses features an aluminum-infused epoxy resin that makes it harder and stronger. It also features an impermeable polyurethane coating on the liner's exterior. After technicians wet-out the liner with the resin, it's pliable for 12 hours. "You don't have that time bomb ticking," says Ken Beyer, owner of

Clog Squad. It cures in about an hour, using either steam or hot water.

During installation, air or water pressure is used to invert the liner, which flips the resin-impregnated side of the liner to the outside, so it can adhere tightly to the interior of the host pipe. At the same time, the polyurethane coating gets turned outside in, forming a smooth and strong pipe within a pipe. The liner is suitable for pipes ranging from 2 to 8 inches in diameter, Beyer says.

"We have a lot of confidence in the system," Goodpaster says. "It's a very smooth and clean lining process. I love it."

QUALITY CONTROL

Goodpaster decided to invest in the Sactools system for two primary reasons. First, he's convinced that lining is the future of pipeline rehabilitation. Second, he didn't like the idea of hiring subcontractors to do the work.

A good match

When asked about the smartest business move he ever made, Duane Goodpaster answers without any hesitation: hiring his son-in-law, Luke Brongersma, age 30, as a drain cleaning technician.

"If I could clone him two or three times, that would be amazing," says Goodpaster, co-owner of All Drains Drain Cleaning and Plumbing Repair in Middletown, Ohio. "People ask for him by name all the time, and he gets a lot more (online) reviews than I do.

"Luke explains things thoroughly to customers and tells them how they can prevent problems from occurring again. And there is no tension between us — no arguing, no problems."

Goodpaster got to know Brongersma at a local gym where they both worked out. When Goodpaster heard that Brongersma was no longer in a relationship, Goodpaster jokingly told him he should meet his daughter, Kodie.

"I didn't like the guy she was dating at the time, so I showed Luke a picture of Kodie," Goodpaster says. "As it turned out, Luke realized he already knew her from high school and we used to live on the same street." The two started dating a month or so later and got married in 2016. "Kodie accuses me of creating an arranged marriage," he says with a laugh. "But it has worked out great for all of us."

The key to successfully working so closely with family members is simply to treat them with respect, Goodpaster says.

Brongersma agrees. "A lot of it comes down to respect for each other," he says. "Every day I'm thankful Duane gave me the opportunity to have this job. So every day I do everything I can to uphold the standards he's established for this company."

It also helps that Goodpaster isn't a micromanager; he trusts Brongersma to make service calls by himself. "Also, we were friends before I married Kodie and we had a good relationship," Brongersma says. "And we've been able to carry that on. I definitely know this isn't super common. But it works really well for us."

Looking down the road toward retirement, Goodpaster says he'd be happy if Brongersma would want to take over the company. "It's been a really good adventure for us, and unless we hit the lottery and we both retire early, the company is his if he wants it," Goodpaster says.

"I definitely hope he'd want to do that, and I hope I provide him with enough knowledge and experience to do it. This work is demanding, and I know I can't do it forever. So if he wants to, that's definitely the direction we're heading."



◀ Technician Luke Brongersma cleans out a drain at the fire station. Duane Goodpaster says hiring Brongersma, his son-in-law, as a drain cleaning technicians was one of the best decisions he has made for the company.

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“We want to make sure our customers receive the best possible results,” he says. “I don’t like putting my reputation for quality work in someone else’s hands.”

Goodpaster estimates that he invested around \$100,000 in the system. But he sees it as an instrumental part of his service offerings going forward. As an example, he points to one of All Drains’ clients, a large global manufacturing company with a plant near Middletown that needs more than 100 feet of sewer pipe repaired.

The sewer line runs under large machines inside the plant, and moving them to excavate and replace pipe is an expensive proposition, plus it would cost the manufacturing company hundreds of thousands of dollars a day in lost productivity from prolonged downtime. “But with this trenchless, no-dig system, we can line the drainpipes without disturbing the company’s production.

“To some people, this might sound like a risky investment. But once I saw how well the technology worked,

“Our biggest challenge is getting homeowners to let us do what needs to be done, especially if previous contractors have failed. That’s where our guarantee comes into play.”

Duane Goodpaster

I couldn’t do it quick enough. To me, it was a no-brainer.

“The bottom line is you need to have the right tools for the job, and I think that’s definitely been one of the keys to our success,” he says.

INSTANT GRATIFICATION


Looking ahead three to five years, Goodpaster says he’d like to hire at least two more technicians.

“I see us continuing to do what we do, just a larger volume of work,” Goodpaster says.

Sometimes Goodpaster is surprised by his company’s growth.

“On the other hand, I never thought about it not working out,” Goodpaster says. “In my head, it’s always just going to happen. I don’t think in reverse. ... I’ve always just thought about the next thing that can make things better. When you have two young daughters and a wife, you have to go out and make it work.”

Goodpaster concedes that finding quality employees with a good work ethic is difficult. But he’s so sure it’ll happen that in a mind-over-matter moment, he already bought a new truck and outfitted it with drain cleaning equipment.

He says his confident outlook always pays dividends. “In my mind, something is always going to work. There’s someone out there who needs a job or a career change. And I’m sure we can find that person.” 



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Betting on an Extreme Makeover

A more uniform approach to branding helped Las Vegas plumbing company hit the marketing jackpot

By Ken Wysocky

Some plumbers may scoff at the idea that a marketing makeover could dramatically amp up their service calls and revenue. Sunshine Ray, co-owner of Atlas Plumbing in Las Vegas, definitely is not one of them. After all, seeing is believing.

Shortly after the company implemented a new branding campaign in June 2018, centered on new vinyl wraps for service vehicles and retro-looking technician's uniforms, revenue doubled compared to the same month a year before. The rebranding effort also included a redesigned website and company logo, Ray says.

The distinctive and dapper uniforms feature brown pants, light-gray shirts, brown suspenders, brown bow ties and brown flat caps (also called newsboy caps). The eye-catching vinyl wraps showcase a new company logo



COMPANY	Atlas Plumbing Inc., Las Vegas
OWNERS	Sunshine and Rod Ray
PRODUCT	Comprehensive rebranding campaign
FUNCTION	Increase brand recognition
FEATURES	Retro-style technician uniforms featuring brown suspenders, bow ties and flat (newsboy) caps; vintage-looking vinyl wraps on service vehicles; redesigned company website, logo and slogan
COST	About \$45,000
WEBSITE	www.atlasplumbinglv.com



◀ One of the newly wrapped Atlas Plumbing vans, parked near the famous Las Vegas sign. (Photos courtesy Atlas Plumbing)

► Members of the Atlas Plumbing team in Las Vegas wear their rebranded uniforms. From left are co-owner Rod Ray and technicians David Smith, Eliseo Banuelos, Brandon Bilyeu and Danny Lloyd.

and mascot that both evoke the same vintage vibe as the uniforms.

“Our numbers started going up significantly the month we started the new marketing campaign,” says Ray, who co-owns the company with her brother, Rod Ray. The siblings assumed ownership of the company in July 2018 after their father, Bob Ray, who established the company in 1980, retired, she says.

“I’m not exaggerating: As soon as the new website launched and people saw the trucks and the uniforms, the year-over-year revenue comparison was crazy — absolutely nuts,” she says.

The upswing in service volume also yielded an unexpected benefit: a substantial increase in residential service and repair work. That decreased the company’s dependence on work for property management companies. It also increased cash flow because residential customers pay faster than companies, she adds.

Work related to property managers used to generate about 70% of the company’s annual gross revenue, while residential work generated the rest. “We felt that was too heavily weighted toward property management,” she says. “Now the percentage is flipped around, with 70% coming from residential work and 30% from property management.”

“We still like the property management work,” she says. “But with residential work, there’s better cash flow and less collection work.”

DIFFERENTIATION IS KEY

When Ray agreed to become a second-generation co-owner, she had just one caveat: She wanted to put her college degree in marketing to work by creating a new and distinctive image for the company. Even though their father had nurtured a successful business, the siblings felt they could build on the solid base he’d established.



“A fully integrated campaign is what branding is all about. If people see enough of something — the same colors, the same mascot and the same slogan, for example — it gets to the point where they recognize you as soon as they see those things.”

Sunshine Ray

Ray’s push for rebranding was sparked in part by a membership in Service Nation Alliance, a contractor coalition that teaches best business practices. “What I learned left me super inspired about branding and what it says about your company,” she recalls.

The point of marketing is to make a company stand out from the competition. And because so many plumbers who use uniforms look the same (if they use them at all) and many contractors drive bland-looking service vehicles, those two areas posed great opportunities for Atlas Plumbing to differentiate from competitors, she explains.

“My brother really likes to wear overalls, and I thought that old-fashioned look just feels good,” she notes. “It makes people remember a better era in which people were nicer and more polite and things were built better.”

Furthermore the company’s mascot — nicknamed “Bob” by the company’s 13 technicians in honor of Ray’s father — wears a similar garb. As such, the technician uniforms literally bring the mascot to life, she says.

Initially, there was a little reluctance from older technicians who didn't see the point of the retro uniforms. "But now they love it — they've totally embraced it," she says.

Customers love the look, too. "Everyone digs it," she says. "Customers ask technicians if they can take pictures of them. It's pretty exciting." And plumbing competitors were wowed when they saw the Atlas Plumbing trucks parked at supply houses around the city, she adds.

GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT

What does Ray's father think about the rebranding effort? "He loves it," Ray says. "Sometimes he just laughs at my ideas and says I'm crazy. But he's super proud of what we're doing."

Rebranding isn't a low-cost endeavor, however. That's especially true when it encompasses so many different components, ranging from a new play-on-words slogan — "Your trusted plumbing fixture since 1980" — all the way to new invoices and business cards.

"A fully integrated campaign is what branding is all about," Ray explains. "If people see enough of something

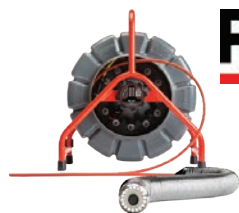
— the same colors, the same mascot and the same slogan, for example — it gets to the point where they recognize you as soon as they see those things. But it takes awhile before people start recognizing that and putting it all together."

Ray points out another consideration: Even the best marketing campaign is useless if technicians provide lousy service. As such, comprehensive training and skilled technicians are critical. (On Google reviews, Atlas Plumbing earns an average rating of 4.8 out of five stars.)

The rebranding campaign represents about a \$45,000 investment, Ray estimates. That cost includes the uniforms; the website-design branding and coordination with the different advertising mediums (performed by Scorpion, a digital marketing firm); the logo and truck wrap designs (created and developed by KickCharge Creative); and printing and applying the vehicle wraps (done by CL Visual and Wrapped LV, respectively).

"It was a lot of money, but it's paid off by increasing revenue," she says. "And I think it will continue to do so. As long as our service continues to match our image, we're going to do great." ■

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Auditing Safety

Taking a proactive approach with in-house safety checks is good for business *By Giles Lambertson*

Ed Koch was the amiable mayor of New York City for 12 years. During his tenure, he was known for greeting his constituents on the street and asking them, “How’m I doing?”

Companies should develop a similar habit and openly solicit feedback from employees about whether safety programs are actually keeping them safe.

One mechanism for doing this is a safety audit. In an audit, a qualified person systematically examines a company’s declared safety rules and regulations along with its day-to-day practices and determines if the two are in sync.

For example, if employees are required to wear hard hats in certain areas of a plant or work site but the examiner discovers the hats generally are not worn, the discrepancy between theory and practice is red-flagged. Red flags signal changes need to be made.

START INSIDE

Safety audits occur in three forms: internal, external and OSHA (sometimes jokingly referred to as eternal). The OSHA audit isn’t necessarily the most important. The earliest identification and elimination of a safety hazard is always the key one. But OSHA is where the buck stops. Failure to be compliant with OSHA’s preventive safety regulations leads to a citation or fine.

OSHA principally enforces regulations by conducting workplace audits or inspections. The inspectors look for violations of safe practices or the absence of safety equipment. The inspections can be conducted without giving a company prior notice, which seems furtive but keeps less ethical company leaders from playing games with employee safety.

Ethical leadership, on the other hand, is not into games. “I like to tell people that a safety management plan should be part of your overall company management system. If management is committed to doing the right

thing, employees are going to do things the right way. It becomes a common culture,” says Kyle Irwin, founder of Irwin’s Safety. The Calgary, Alberta, firm teaches safety to company executives in western Canada and occasionally in the U.S.

While “doing the right thing” works the same on either side of the border, Irwin says the consequences of ignoring workplace safety often are more severe in the states. “We’re more regulated in Canada. We have more government agencies looking into it. The day-to-day standards are higher. However, the risk of litigation is much higher in the U.S. If you are a company in the U.S. and make some bad decision in respect to safety, you’re more likely to be litigated by the people affected by that decision.”

Neither of these two scenarios — more rigorous day-to-day regulation or greater legal risk — is welcomed by company owners. The happy alternative is for a company to self-regulate at a responsible level and thereby create a culture of safety as a first line of defense against unsafe behavior and work conditions. Internal audits are the way to develop that culture.

Usually conducted by a company’s safety manager, ongoing internal audits sometimes are informal, undertaken on the spur of the moment while passing through a workplace or visiting a job site. Or they are formal, with an inspection occurring on a day purposely set aside for it with a checklist as the inspection tool.

The list can be as long and detailed as your company wishes. Small companies that are just developing a health and safety program sometimes get by with a one-page checklist with a comments section at the bottom. The completed listing is filed for follow-up and future reference.

More rigorous internal inspections are longer and more nuanced. An informal short-form inspection might ask, “Is there a standby employee positioned outside the confined space to provide emergency assistance?” Whereas

a more thorough inspection checklist might ask an additional question: “Is the standby employee trained and equipped to render assistance in case of an emergency?”

These internal audits sometimes catch dangerous situations and correct them. However, the hope is that they will discover few serious defects in safety and instead find areas where reasonably safe behavior can be made safer. The frequency of the internal audits and the fact that they are being conducted without coercion from outside entities makes them nonthreatening to a company and its employees. Therefore, they are less likely to cover up something unsafe.

“The attitude of the safety manager should not be ‘I am here and I’m going to change things.’ It should be ‘I am here and we’re going to learn things together.’”

Kyle Irwin

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Irwin notes that the attitude of the person doing an audit goes a long way in determining how effective it will be. “I really think the No. 1 requirement for being an effective safety manager is to know your workplace and understand the different roles in the company and the hazards of each role.”

He gives the example of an engineer leaving his office two or three times a year to walk around a work site. “You wouldn’t go up to him during his walk-around and talk to him about the need to wear a hard hat.” Such a “gotcha” move would be officious. Rather, a safety manager should prioritize his time to deal with bigger workplace hazards.

Irwin recommends that safety leaders engage with employees rather than confront them. To effectively communicate the need for safety, a safety manager must first have a relationship. Failure to connect with people means the chance of influencing them is slim, he says.

“The attitude of the safety manager should not be ‘I am here and I’m going to change things.’ It should be ‘I am here and we’re going to learn things together.’ It’s the difference between being a safety cop and a safety adviser. If you’re a cop, you ask, ‘Where is your hat?’ An adviser asks, ‘Is there a reason you’re not wearing your hat?’

The attitude should be that the adviser is learning from the employees.”

Seasoned employees might be expected to be most responsive to safety counsel, having been around long enough to witness the consequences of unsafe behavior. Unfortunately, longtime employees can be the least coachable. “With a lot of people in the older generation, when you say, ‘Hey, we need to do this and this,’ they become defensive. They feel like you’re suggesting they weren’t doing something right.”

Once again, Irwin counsels engaging with the old hands so they understand their experience is respected. “You might say, ‘We know what you’re doing is working really well and you’re not injuring yourself. But someone newer on the job might not be as capable and could get hurt. We’d like to try a more systematic approach to doing this.’”

A safety manager needs to be something of a diplomat, in other words. However, diplomacy won’t always work. Irwin laughs about the time he confronted a longtime employee of a company working a railway project. “He was in a machine, and I walked up and said, ‘You need to wear that safety belt because some government inspector is going to come along and see you not wearing it and throw you off the work site.’ He looked at me, said, ‘Back off!’ and closed the door.”

You can’t win them all, even when you’re president of a safety management company. The larger lesson, though, is that rules apply to everyone. Irwin adds that the most frequent violators of company workplace safety rules are not hidebound employees, but younger generation workers who seem disinclined to follow safety regimens created for their own good.

INSURANCE TEAMWORK

Insurance companies can play a role in auditing a company’s safety. At Koberlein Environmental in northeast Pennsylvania, insurance agents have become real partners in policing and encouraging safety. Company owner Chris Ravenscroft says a Penn National Insurance representative, Jerry Kozich, is particularly involved.

Kozich attends half the company’s safety meetings. He also periodically performs impromptu external audits of work sites. “I get a call several times a year from Jerry who says he’s in the area and would like to see a job. That’s been very helpful. Some jobs he visits are being perfectly managed. Other jobs we need to do something a little different, things he’s identified. We get on top of it immediately.”

This working relationship between insurer and insured has persisted for 15 years. Ravenscroft believes it to be a valuable add-on feature of his insurance policy. "I've asked him if this kind of relationship is commonplace, and he says it isn't, mostly because businesses are uncomfortable working with an insurance company at that level. Some insurance companies simply don't offer the service. We feel it really adds value."

Ravenscroft is his own safety manager, though he obviously has other responsibilities. He also has various team managers who spontaneously walk around jobs, looking for safety issues. That commitment from the top down establishes a strong safety culture.

SAFETY PAYS

Safety is its own reward, but other benefits flow to companies that do safety audits. Irwin notes that, in Canada, annual internal audits are required to document compliance and an external audit is conducted every two

years by a certifying agency. It leads to public certification as a safe place to work, which tends to attract employees and business partners. The financial reward for certification is shaving of insurance premiums, typically by 10% to 20%.

Ravenscroft says a couple of other benefits accrue to his wastewater management services company besides a lower insurance premium. One is a discounted rate on workers' compensation when the Pennsylvania Department of Labor certifies the company's safety committee. And because Koberlein has a documented lower-than-standard rate of lost-time injuries per hours worked, business partners are pleased.

"Some of our larger clients — energy companies and utility customers — feel good about working with a company that's exceeding the safety standard. This is another way we receive the benefits of having a safe company." **PI**

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Kate Zabriskie

Avoiding Crew Burnout in Simple Steps

Keeping your team happy and productive at the height of the busy season requires keen observation and effective communication from the boss

By Kate Zabriskie

The team is exhausted. They're burned out, and I am too. I don't know if we can recover. We've been working at 150% for a few months straight — at least most of us have.

More change? Really? We've been through three major transitions in as many months. Everyone is really on edge. I am pretty sure Joe is going to quit.

For plumbers, summer seems to be the time when the demands of the job are ramped up to maximum output. You are getting repair calls and installation calls and are also trying to schedule your guys their time off during the summer months, stretching some of your crew thin. During fall, winter and spring, your company is typically busy, but summer just seems a lot worse.

Even in the best of times, creating and maintaining a high-functioning team is work. If you follow these steps, you can provide some relief and keep members of your crew pulling in the same direction all summer long.

STEP ONE

The first step is accepting a list of truths:

Truth One: Employees have different levels of buy-in, a range of work goals and varying home and work demands.

Truth Two: Not everyone experiences burnout in the same way, and work isn't always distributed evenly in most companies. Some people probably are more burned out than others.

Truth Three: Great teamwork will compensate for a lack of resources in the short term. However, teams that are stretched too thin for too long begin to show signs of wear and tear.

Truth Four: If the leader isn't a believer in what the team needs to accomplish or isn't working as hard as he or she can to bring the team over the finish line each day, the crew will know it and react in a range of ways — most of which are neutral at best.

Truth Five: Transparency matters. People don't like being left in the dark or, worse still, lied to.

Truth Six: Too many changes at once usually don't go

over well unless there's a logical flow to them, a sense of fairness about what's being changed and the absence of unnecessary chaos or drama.

Truth Seven: Elephants in a room stay there if they're allowed to do so. If a team is not prepared to operate with candor and address unspoken issues, there's only so much that can be done to keep everyone together.

Truth Eight: Team members' perceptions of the team's condition are their truth. You may have plenty of data to argue to the contrary, but until people are ready to listen and believe what you show them, what they currently think is what is.

STEP TWO

Once you've got a firm understanding of the basic truths, the next step is taking a long and hard look at what's working, what isn't and why. Does everyone understand and buy into the team's mission? Is work distributed fairly? Are some people doing more than they should have to do, while others are doing less than they should? Are people resentful of each other? Is there drama, and do you know the source? Is the team's burnout a recent phenomenon or has its decay been long in the making? Is the burnout caused by internal factors, external factors or a combination of both? Have people been misled or lied to in the past by a boss?

Those questions are just the tip of the iceberg and some ideas to get started. In fixing burnout, asking the right questions is as important as, if not more so than, taking action. A good list of questions will help you reduce the likelihood that you are treating symptoms or curing the wrong disease altogether.

STEP THREE

When you think you have a good grasp of the current situation and have verified your findings with others, it's time to start thinking about what could be. A fast way to imagine a different state is to work through some more questions.



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- How do we want to feel about our work?
- What gets us excited about our work or what do we enjoy?
- What changes do we need to make to our work product, our work processes or our people interactions?
- What needs to stay the same?
- What level of performance do we need from each team member?
- What are we going to do if those levels aren't met?
- What additional resources do we need?
- What can we do to encourage transparency and communication?
- How will we celebrate improvements?


STEP FOUR

With a clear view of the present and a possible future, the next step is prioritizing. In most cases, burned-out teams don't burn out overnight. Often the process is long and marked by a series of declines, bad luck and unfortunate circumstances. Consequently, the recovery process is often long. In fact, the team may not realize some of the elements identified in step three for a long time. The trick is to keep the truths discussed in step one in mind as you prioritize a plan of action to get from the reality you uncovered in step two to the future you envisioned in step three.

STEP FIVE

The final step in the recovery planning process is creating a deliberate communication plan. Recognize that you need to overexplain and repeatedly share information. Once is not enough. Also, your team will have some good days and bad. What's important is making progress in the right direction. After a series of successes, everyone should be feeling a little less burned out and a lot more excited about the work at hand.

RELIEF ON THE WAY

With these five steps well in hand, you're positioned to provide some immediate triage to your team members who are battling burnout. Burnout can be pervasive throughout a company, so get your first-aid kit out as soon as you pick up on the problem, and mitigate the issue before it negatively impacts your operation. 

Kate Zabriskie is president of Business Training Works Inc., a Maryland-based talent development firm. Reach her at www.buinesstrainingworks.com.



Anja Smith

All About Reputation

Collecting and responding to customer reviews will help boost your company's recognition and profits

By Anja Smith

The fancy marketing jargon is “reputation management,” but most plumbers say it like a four-letter word: reviews.

If this topic makes you stick your head in the sand and wish for the days of phone books — sorry. You are not in luck. Do not play the lottery. Up to 95% of consumers report they read reviews from local companies before they make a purchase. Those numbers skew higher in younger demographics, so the trend will only continue up.

Online reputation is more important and prominent than ever. Reviews are likely to increase in importance as millennials and Generation Z buy homes.

The time has come. You need a reputation management strategy. The reason you need three MBA-level words to name this thing is the sheer number of review sites.

If you are late to the review game, don't worry; it isn't too late. Start by asking all of your past customers to review your business. This way, you'll gain traction.

Wouldn't it be nice if online reviews all lived in one place?

Unfortunately, it turns out collecting customer reviews is a profitable business, hence the battle for dominance. That means our job, as the company being reviewed, is harder. We have to keep up with our rating and reputation on several websites.

There is a silver lining. These sites also drive traffic to our business. Every major online review platform offers a free listing. Don't think you have to pay to play. Although they may encourage you to advertise, it isn't necessary.

What sounds more authentic? You telling your customer you are reliable and professional or a verified customer saying the same thing? These websites are a powerful marketing tool. They provide social proof — a fancy way of saying we are sheep who prefer to follow the herd.

Reputation management is both a marketing strategy and a customer service tool. Consistent review marketing pays big. By building your online presence and influence, reviews help new customers find your business. That's the power of social proof.

Imagine the legacy online reviews are building for your business. What if reviews are still there 20 years from now? How cool would it be to read five-star reviews going back a generation?

Secure a five-star legacy by tracking and responding to reviews. One recent survey showed that 90% of consumers take a business response into consideration. Take heart in knowing that you can address a critical review, should one get posted. Upset, irrational customers write one-star reviews. Don't argue with these individuals. Instead, show concern and offer to settle the issue offline.

Even if the customer doesn't respond, it shows consumers you are trying. It's how you handle mistakes that matter. Most consumers understand you can't make everyone happy.

You also want to respond to positive reviews. Take a few moments to thank customers. Genuine engagement encourages reviewers and shows you care about customer service. Online reviews are useful as a customer service tool. Look for trends in customer feedback to pinpoint areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in your company.

Many review sites frown upon offering incentives for leaving a rating. For this reason, it is best to avoid bribery tactics like discounts or thank-you gifts. Instead, create a habit of asking for reviews at the end of appointments.



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A reminder text or email with an easy-to-access link is a simple way to spur customers to action.

A happy customer doesn't mind leaving a review. The more you build your profiles and collect reviews, the more attention your listing will get. This, in turn, attracts customers more likely to leave a review. This new style of word-of-mouth pays it forward and helps the phone ring.

If you are late to the review game, don't worry; it isn't too late. Start by asking all of your past customers to review your business. This way, you'll gain traction.

Volume and timeliness matter to readers. The online review game may feel like a high school popularity contest sometimes. But savvy customers realize you have at least a few friends and family willing to help you out. Recent activity and a higher volume brings authenticity to the reviews.

Developing and maintaining a reputation management strategy will help your business grow and profit. So, if you haven't lately, go read your reviews. 

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

CALENDAR

Sept. 11-16

American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE) Convention & Expo, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans. Visit www.aspe.org

Sept. 22-24

Service World Expo, Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Florida. Visit www.serviceworldexpo.com

Nov. 9-12

Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) Conference, Paradise Point, San Diego. Visit www.safepumbing.org

Jan. 25-27

International Air-Conditioning, Heating, Refrigerating Exposition (AHR Expo), McCormick Place, Chicago. Visit www.ahrexpo.com 

Plumber invites organizations and associations to submit details about upcoming industry trade shows and conferences for our calendar of events. editor@plumbermag.com.



Reaching Out

Water heater, boiler manufacturer keeps open communication with professionals to improve products and training *By Cory Dellenbach*

Starting as a boiler manufacturer in the late 1800s, Bradford White didn't sway too far from that in its 130-plus year history.

The company, based in Pennsylvania, has grown significantly since those early days and now has 1,900-plus employees spread across several facilities throughout the U.S. and one in Canada. Bradford White is still manufacturing boilers but has also added water heaters and storage tanks to its offerings.

While they've added products, one thing hasn't changed — its continued support of the professionals in the plumbing industry.

Matt Kozak, vice president of sales for Bradford White Water Heaters, says the company has always reached out to industry professionals to find ways to improve products and now reaches out to them in different ways — virtually — to help them with training opportunities.



Bradford White Water Heaters

FACILITY LOCATIONS Middletown and Niles, Michigan; Rochester, New Hampshire; Ambler, Pennsylvania; Halton Hills, Ontario

EMPLOYEES 1,900

PRODUCTS Water heaters, boilers and storage tanks

WEBSITE www.bradfordwhite.com



Plumber: Can you tell me a little about the history of Bradford White?

Kozak: Bradford White began as the Pennsylvania Range Boiler Co. back in 1881. In 1968, Pennsylvania-Bradford merged with White Products of Middletown, Michigan, to form a new company, the Bradford White Corp. In 1992, under the direction of A. Robert Carnevale, CEO, and Richard Milock, chief operating officer, a new employee-owned Bradford White emerged as a company dedicated to wholesale distribution and professional installation, a philosophy that continues today.

Bradford White currently employs 1,900 people across its subsidiaries, which include

◀ A Bradford White employee affixes warning labels to nearly completed water heaters. (Photos courtesy of Bradford White Water Heaters)

Bradford White Water Heaters, manufactured in Middleville; Niles Steel Tank, with its manufacturing facilities for both carbon and stainless steel storage tanks located in Niles, Michigan; and LAARS Heating Systems, located in Rochester, New Hampshire, where we manufacture boilers and volume water heaters. The corporation's headquarters is in Ambler, Pennsylvania, and we have a Canadian sales and distribution operation, Bradford White - Canada, located in Halton Hills, Ontario.

Plumber: Water heaters have changed a lot during the past 20-plus years, with new technologies and options available to customers. What has Bradford White done to stay on top of these changes?

Kozak: Fundamentally, we are always steadily engaged with end users and installers to understand their needs while also remaining heavily involved in the industry at large and closely following regulatory matters affecting water- and space-heating products and trends. All of these in combination have allowed Bradford White to continuously develop new products and improve existing products to meet a very wide variety of residential and commercial customer demands.

Plumber: What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in the industry in the past five years?

Kozak: Technological advancements with regard to products have always been a part of our industry, but some of the most significant changes as of late relate more to distribution and how people in our industry are doing business. For example, big-box stores such as The Home Depot and Lowe's have done a reasonably good job of blurring the lines between traditional plumbing and HVAC wholesalers and retail, drawing more pros to their buying ranks. E-commerce has also come into play to a greater degree, with many of our wholesaler customers now more heavily engaged in business-to-business e-commerce distribution to help offset the digital encroachment of the box stores.



▲ A Bradford White employee works on the finishing touches of a water heater in the company's manufacturing plant in Middleville, Michigan. The company is steadily engaged with end users and installers in order to continually improve the products and offer more of what they are looking for.

▼ Bradford White, based in Pennsylvania, started off by building just boilers in 1881, but over the years, it has added water heaters and storage tanks. Water heaters are manufactured in Middleville.



Plumber: When should a plumber be looking at a tankless model compared to a regular tank water heater, or vice versa?

Kozak: This is where a contractor's technological expertise and customer understanding can really shine, as every situation is different. First, the contractor has to understand the customer's budgetary considerations in both the short and long term. And second, the contractor has to understand, based on the entire system and potential cost of the job, what the most practical solution is. There are some key questions to address: Will the tank or tankless product better support the current and future hot-water demand of the household? Are there any construction projects in the near term that would affect

“Fundamentally, we are always steadily engaged with end users and installers to understand their needs while also remaining heavily involved in the industry at large and closely following regulatory matters affecting water- and space-heating products and trends.”

Matt Kozak



the decision? Will the product, installation and operational costs be recovered over the life of the product? Will the home's existing fuel (gas/oil/electric) delivery systems best accommodate a tank or tankless product? By taking this consultative approach, the contractor will build trust, gain credibility and likely ensure a return customer.

Plumber: On your company's website, there is a Contractor Financing Program mentioned, can you explain that program a little bit and how it helps plumbers/other contractors?

Kozak: Professional installers can offer financing to their customers to cover the costs associated with Bradford White residential water heater and boiler installations, as well as other HVAC and plumbing services. Fortiva Retail Credit, provider of the program, offers full support for Bradford White contractors who wish to offer this financing to their customers. Fortiva Retail Credit also handles all customer billing and support.

Plumber: How has Bradford White been able to reach out to plumbers during this COVID-19 time, and what has the company done to help them?

Kozak: For a company like Bradford White that prides itself on a strong field presence and face-to-face relationships, the COVID-19 limitations are obviously challenging. Throughout the pandemic, we have been diligent in staying in communication with both our wholesaler and contractor customers by any means necessary to continue supporting their businesses. Naturally, this has required a lot of calls, emails and teleconferences by our various sales, marketing and customers support teams, as well as our dedicated manufacturers' representatives who are well immersed in our customers' businesses.


From a training perspective, we have taken our hands-on training experiences to the web via live training broadcasts from our iTEC Training center in Middletown. Over the past few weeks, nearly 4,000 participants have joined us for these sessions. We have also increased



▲ The Bradford White shipping warehouse at the Middletown, Michigan, manufacturing facility is filled with water heaters that are ready to be sent to installers and customers.

the accessibility of our troubleshooting and installation tip information for all contractors who might work on our products, not just regular Bradford White customers registered in our For The Pro program.

Plumber: What is in store for Bradford White's product line for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021?

Kozak: Thus far in 2020, from a residential perspective, we added a 65-gallon model to our AeroTherm heat pump water heater series, released a power direct vent version of our residential condensing product and further enhanced our power vent models with a lower-profile, quieter and more efficient blower unit. On the commercial side, we recently announced the addition of modulation and building management system features within one of our flagship commercial products, the eF Series 120 model. These features will be integrated into other Bradford White commercial models over the next several months. There are other significant product announcements slated for 2020 and 2021 that we look forward to sharing in the months ahead. 

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Product Spotlight

Hand-held drain cleaner takes the stress off the user

By Tim Dobbins

Advancements in hand-held drain cleaners have simplified close-quarter cleaning and unclogging and are efficiently tackling the jobs where large industrial drum machines are overkill or can't reach due to space limitations.

The GO 31 ERGO Handygun is the newest addition to the Gorlitz Sewer & Drain and Ergo Auger line of hand-held drain cleaning machines. It is designed to be lightweight and powerful enough to handle the jobs otherwise tackled by small floor or countertop models, allowing the Handygun to power through stubborn jobs in confined areas.

"What makes it unique is that it's the only hand-held drain gun that weighs zero pounds while under operation," says Dan Beesley, owner of Ergo Auger and inventor of the Handygun. "There is no stress or strain to hold it up level with the drain inlet."

That is made possible from the Handygun's ability to rest on an adjustable leg while in use. The extendable leg is engineered and placed directly underneath the center of gravity, and the ergonomic grip and power switch are located directly above the center of gravity. The placement of those features positions the operator's hands in



a location to create leverage and ultimate control over the tool.

The GO 31 ERGO Handygun is constructed with an aluminum drum and neoprene rubber sleeve to prevent splashing. It is engineered for versatility and accepts various cable sizes including 1/4, 9/32 and 5/16 inch, allowing it to clean drains 1.5 to 2.5 inches in diameter and 50 feet in length. The drum is provided with

a right-hand-wound, bulb head cable that's 1/4 inch in diameter by 35 feet long.

"It's lighter than other popular cordless drain guns with consistent, sustained power supply," Beesley says. The unit has a reversible drill that operates at 0 to 720 rpm while running on 120 volt, 60 Hz at 3.5 amps. A finger-trigger speed control lets the user adjust speed and power during the job to break through tough clogs.

Reactions from contractors using the product suggest the lightweight, ergonomic design is easy to use and performs the job well. "Feedback has been nothing but tremendous. Once the user feels the difference, they'll never go back," Beesley says. "It's a metaphorical night vs. day difference compared to other pistol-grip drain guns." 877-446-7548; www.gorlitz.com.



Bacharach USA MGS-402 dual-channel gas detection controller

The MGS-402 gas detection controller from Bacharach USA is for refrigerant, toxic and combustible gas detection applications. The system is designed for safety compliance

in mechanical rooms, cold-storage facilities, walk-in freezers and cold-room applications to 40 degrees below

zero. The unit is part of a series of gas detectors that connect through Modbus to up to two remote MGS-410 gas detectors located within 1,000 feet. The MGS-402 is powered by 110-240 volt AC, and it provides three 10A output relays (fault, low alarm and high alarm) to initiate auxiliary ventilation or restrict refrigerant flow and two analog outputs for interface to a building management system or fire/safety panel packaged in an IP66 enclosure. Upstream Modbus connectivity enables remote configuration and communication with building management systems. 800-736-4666; www.mybacharach.com.

Rheem ProTerra hybrid electric water heater

Rheem's ProTerra water heater from Rheem is eco-friendly at up to 4.0 UEF. The system is available in gallon sizes 40, 50, 65 and 80 to support various hot-water needs. The ProTerra with LeakGuard model has built-in leak detection and auto shut-off that limits water loss from the tank to no more than 20 ounces. Using the EcoNet mobile app, it can monitor the system from any location, adjust water temperatures for controlled comfort and receive maintenance alerts to ensure the system continues to run smoothly without interruption. Other advanced features include scheduling around peak electricity rates, an energy-usage tracker to manage consumption without sacrificing comfort and five operating modes to balance between energy usage and hot-water availability. **800-621-5622; www.rheem.com.**



SJE Rhombus EZ Series In-Site Bluetooth control panels

The redesigned EZ Series In-Site CL data logging control panels from SJE Rhombus are available in simplex and duplex models. The panels use Bluetooth to connect to the new EZ In-Site Connect app, available for both Android and Apple smart devices.

With the app, there's no need to open the panel for configuration, viewing status or downloading data. The Bluetooth module allows safe and secure access in all weather conditions. The panel configuration can be converted in the field to either timed dose or demand dose using a tablet or smartphone. The panels record up to 4,000 system events, including pump runtimes, pump cycles, alarm conditions, hand/off/automatic settings, power outages, service calls and more. The simple and accurate C-Level sensor converts the water pressure in a tank into a low-voltage electrical signal read by a variety of level monitoring products manufactured by SJE Rhombus. **218-847-1317; www.sjerrhombus.com.**



Triangle Tube Smart 316 indirect water heater

Triangle Tube's Smart 316 indirect water heaters will be available in all current Smart model sizes ranging from 30 to 120 gallons. New product enhancements include high-grade stainless steel inner tank, acid pickling that promotes corrosion resistance, an improved welding process, watertight top cover with an enhanced shell that prevents corrosion of the outer tank and a dry well that is subject to pressure testing prior to installation. **856-228-8881; www.triangletube.com.**



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Service Vans, Fleet Management, Franchises and Software

By Craig Mandli

GPS/Fleet Tracking

ClearPathGPS Owlcam+

ClearPathGPS's dash camera solution from Owlcam+ detects impact or broken glass events when a vehicle is off. Because there's no SD card, there's no way to tamper with the footage. Video captured is seamlessly linked to GPS tracking data and provides two forms of evidence in the event of a claim. Twenty-second video clips can be requested from within the portal and stored in the media manager for 30 days or downloaded locally for sharing/storing. Event snapshots can be sent by the driver to the portal by saying, "OK, Presto" and can immediately be viewed remotely by the fleet manager. Its 4G LTE connectivity means cloud upload of critical clips and remote viewing is possible even when the vehicle is off. **888-734-0384; www.clearpathgps.com.**



Lytx fleet tracking service

Video-enhanced GPS fleet tracking service from Lytx allows plumbing businesses of all sizes to gain new levels of visibility into their fleet to help meet customer demand for fast, accurate and seamless service while optimizing operational efficiency. It is integrated with video to help business owners efficiently manage and monitor their assets in the field, both in real time and up to seven days in the past. With fleet tracking, users can access fleet status, keep plumbing technicians on schedule, improve time to service, and review and search driving video for a complete, easily accessible picture of their fleet performance. With fuel and maintenance insights, owners can also monitor inefficient vehicles and drivers to optimize fleet operations. With the visibility provided by fleet tracking, plumbing businesses can improve their customer service and maximize efficiency and productivity, resulting in a business that runs as smoothly and profitable as possible. **866-419-5861; www.lytx.com.**



GPS Fleet Consulting SafeFleet dashcam/GPS

The SafeFleet dashcam/GPS combo unit from GPS Fleet Consulting is designed to provide important benefits to any business running a fleet of vehicles. The easily installed hardware provides location updates and event-based video recordings in near real time. The data can be viewed from a computer or through a mobile device. It helps protect billable time against customer disputes and provides accurate accounting of hours for payroll, real-world examples for coaching against risky driving behaviors and protection against frivolous claims. It can help reduce the risk and cost of accidents, decrease idle time and help with proactive vehicle maintenance. It includes advanced vehicle diagnostic sensors and a safe driving rewards program. **800-609-7935; www.gpsfleetconsulting.com.**



NexTraQ software

NexTraQ software provides driver assignments that keep track of who is driving a vehicle on any given day. It can optimize daily planning, help drivers accomplish more during the day and provide fleet tracking to find the location of a single vehicle or the entire fleet. 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 tools available 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.**



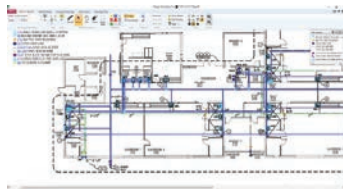
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McCormick Systems plumbing and mechanical estimating software

McCormick Systems plumbing and mechanical estimating software with Design Estimating Pro provides contractors with the tools needed for a fast estimate, PDF takeoff and design-build in one estimating program. It includes a database complete with items, assemblies, labor units and material pricing, with estimators that can create an instant material list and professional final bid by simply clicking. Contractors measure pipe, count fixtures, create custom symbols and design-build directly onto the PDF drawing in a fraction of the time and training it takes on a CAD program. The software additionally incorporates the must-have feature of a work breakdown structure so the contractor can easily manage the project to completion after being awarded the contract. Contractors can estimate and design-build at the same time, all within one program. **800-444-4890; www.mccormicksys.com.**



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Service Van



Pipe Lining Supply MicroShop

The **MicroShop** on-wheels service vehicle from **Pipe Lining Supply** is built for the plumbing and

drain cleaning industry. The vehicle contains all of the equipment needed to clean drains, coat drainpipe (Quik-Coating) and line sewer pipe (Quik-Shot), including all materials and supplies held in a footprint of 6.5 by 12 feet. The unit has onboard 3,500-watt power inverter, hoist, 70 cfm

compressor, calibration roller table for wetting-out a liner, as well as shelving to hold materials. The unit allows the operator to park in an urban standard parking space, perform the work and leave without finding staging areas or special parking permits to complete jobs. It is capable of lining 600 feet of pipe from the van. **888-354-6464; www.pipeliningupply.com.**

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The **PACKOUT** modular storage system from Milwaukee Tool has a quick-attachment mechanism that gives users the freedom to stack and lock toolboxes, organizers, totes and bags of different sizes in numerous configurations that best suit their needs. The mounting plate provides users the ability to stabilize and secure their storage in the shop or in a vehicle. 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 lockers and workbenches

Ranger Design's lockers have been updated with new black end panels. The width has increased by 2 inches to add extra storage space, and the install brackets have been updated to newer and tougher versions. For both the new lockers and workbenches, the doors have been standardized to match the shelving doors. This helps reduce inventory and makes install simpler for both our customers and distributors. The end panels on the aluminum workbenches have altered slightly to accommodate updated brackets. **800-565-5321; www.rangerdesign.com.**



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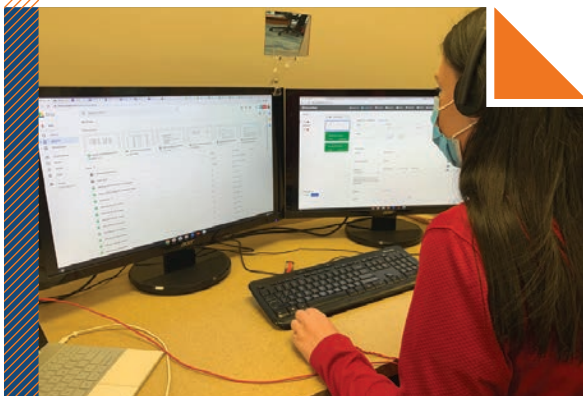


Plumber

Service Vans, Fleet Management, Franchises and Software


By Craig Mandli

Leveraging solid franchise systems with responsive software



Problem: The COVID-19 pandemic hit, and **Zoom Drain Franchising Co.** had to respond fast. The office crews headed home and needed updated procedures for customer service and job workflows. Objectives included remaining safe and solvent. That meant mitigating the spread of disease to team members and customers and keeping their essential workers working.

Solution: “We store our operating manuals in Google Drive. We consulted our human resources professional and the CDC and government guidelines,” says Jim Criniti, owner of Zoom Drain PA and CEO of Zoom Drain Franchising Co. “Because we already have extensive procedures, we just needed to add COVID-19-specific items. Our ServiceTitan software made a big difference when it came to implementing the new procedures. We incorporated the procedures into forms in ServiceTitan. That allowed us to put the scripts and checklists right into the workflow.”

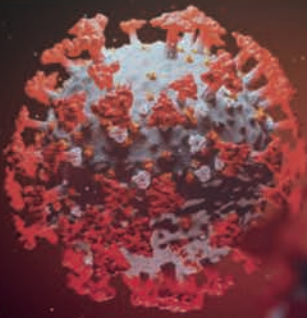
Result: “We didn’t skip a beat,” Criniti says. “The procedures were stitched into the software. Across our 18 locations, service coordinators, dispatchers and service techs were required to use the new scripts and contactless procedures before they could click through to the next screen. It made training and accountability so much easier. Septage is always dangerous, and Zoom Drain understands the importance of cleanliness and safety. The COVID-19 environment requires an extra level of protection for employees and clients. ServiceTitan embraced the new normal head-on and helped us stay safe and keep working.” 877-855-5100; www.zoomdrain.com. 

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#102

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Clearing clogged sinks, tubs and laundry drains couldn't be easier. Leave your heavy drain cleaning tools in the truck and grab the lightweight Kinetic Water Ram instead. It quickly clears slow draining tubs, stubborn traps, and long narrow lines, yet weighs just 10 lbs.

The Ram uses a burst of compressed air that bypasses vents and stacks to hit the stoppage head-on, yet it won't harm pipes. And best of all, the all metal Ram is made right here in the USA.

See it in action at www.drainbrain.com/ram, or call the DrainBrains at 800-245-6200 for more information.



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The toughest tools down the line.™ **General
PIPE CLEANERS**