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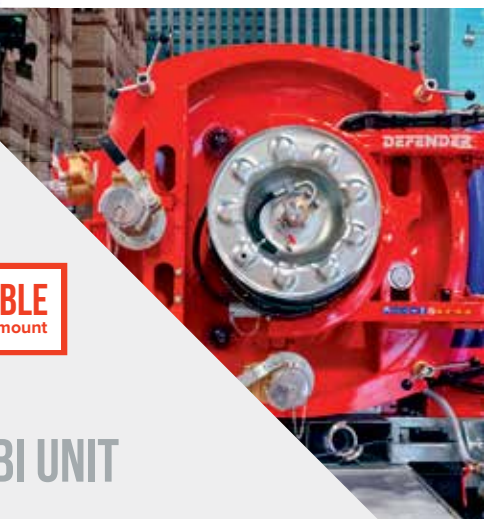
GOING PLATINUM

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Plumber Profile

Going Platinum

Contractor changes direction and adds specialized services to compliment his plumbing business.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

J.D. Christensen, owner of Platinum Plumbing LLC in Pocatello, Idaho, applies glue to a drain pipe during an installation project in Pocatello. The small company, with just three employees, offers directional drilling, excavation, service-and-repair plumbing throughout Southeast Idaho. (Photography by William Schaefer)

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Cory Dellenbach

The Customer Experience

Appearance and how you treat people all contribute to the customer experience, and you want it to be top-notch

W

hat is the best way to make a great first impression? That's an easy question, and the answer is just as simple: appearance.

How you, your fellow plumbing crew and your work vehicles look sets a great first impression for any customers. You may be the best plumber in the area, but that won't matter if you show up to a customer's property the first time with ripped up jeans, torn T-shirt, and looking like you haven't showered in days.

I know it wouldn't instill confidence in me if I saw you showing up looking like that. Thankfully most companies that I've dealt with — either at my property doing work or talking to them for stories for this magazine — are very professional with their appearances. I've heard horror stories from others, though.

START WITH UNIFORMS

One easy way to make sure you and your team are looking professional is by having uniforms. Many plumbing companies these days have uniforms. The uniforms don't have to be anything special, they could just be simple T-shirts with your company's logo and name on them. They're not very expensive and double as great branding and advertising tools for your company.

Uniforms also provide extra security for your customer as they are a way for the customer to ensure they are allowing someone from your company to enter their property and not just some random person that could be there for other reasons.

Speaking of uniforms, make sure you and your team have extra uniforms and that they are getting cleaned regularly. One idea here is having a specific person at the office that is responsible for uniform collection and cleaning, or hiring a uniform cleaning company to do that for you.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT

So you have the uniforms all handled, but there are other ways to make a great first impression with customers. A big one is how you interact with that potential customer or current customer. This starts with that initial phone call from them and then at their property doing the work.

First of all, be polite and respectful to them. If they are calling in on the phone, make sure that you are being clear and loud enough for them to hear. Many of them are calling in because of a plumbing emergency and are already stressed, don't make it worse for them by blowing them off. Treat them like you'd want to be treated.

At their homes, be upfront with them on costs and what you are going to be doing to fix the issue. Again, at their home, speak to them kindly and respectfully. You are in their home, after all. When it's time to give them the invoice, walk them through it when you hand it to them and explain any charges that might not be self-explanatory.

THE EXPERIENCE

The customer experience should be top-notch. That is what you and your team are striving to achieve every time a customer calls for work to be done. Make sure they are happy they called you when the job is all said and done.

If they aren't happy, they aren't passing along your company name or information to their friends and family and you're losing potential customers.

How do you make your customers' experiences with your company stand out? Tell me about them by emailing me at editor@plumbermag.com.

Enjoy this issue! 📧

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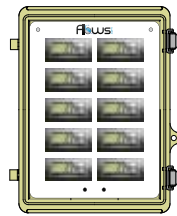


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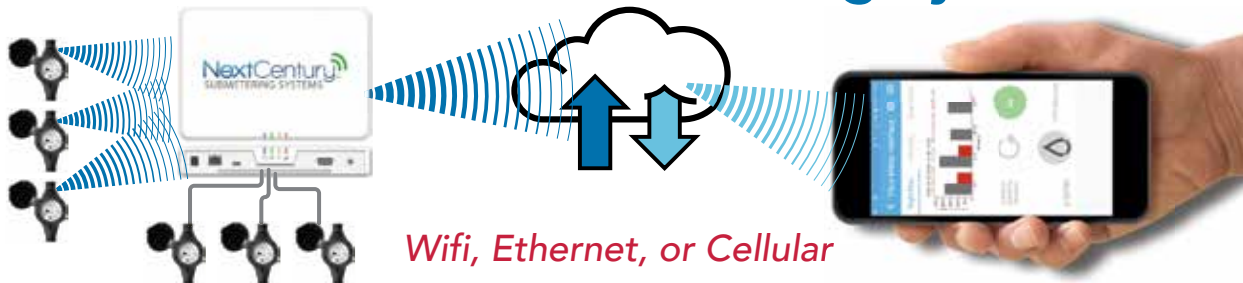


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relevant and interesting plumbing content across the internet and social media. In our e-newsletters, we regularly highlight that and share what else out there we're reading and watching. For example, this video from the American Plumber Stories documentary web series featuring Alpha Elite Plumbing out of Colorado Springs. Be sure to sign up for *Plumber* e-newsletters if you haven't already.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Company Takes on Comedian's Plumbing Movie Parody Challenge

Austin, Texas-based Radiant Plumbing & Air Conditioning has become known in its community for its various pun-heavy and satirical marketing materials, from radio spots to window displays. A main attraction, though, is its 30-second TV ads, which are typically movie-themed. This caught the attention of comedian John Oliver back in March, as he dedicated a short segment to it on his HBO show. He ultimately challenged the company to do a parody of a movie of his choosing, and Radiant Plumbing delivered.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

"Instead of becoming fixated on one specific thing happening with a urinal clog, look at all urinal issues as a restoration of the whole system. Don't think of it as an individual component repair."

— *How to Approach Servicing Urinals*

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QUICK FIX

The Ins and Outs of Pipe Patching

Fiberglass pipe patches are an ideal solution when only a small section of pipe needs to be repaired, there are too many bends for full-length lining to navigate, or budget constraints make excavation or full-length lining too costly. In this online exclusive, Alex Meyer, a product manager for RIDGID, provides some things to keep in mind if you are considering adding pipe patching to your service offerings. ▲ plumbermag.com/featured



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Plumber Profile

▶ Tana and J.D. Christensen, owners of Platinum Plumbing LLC in Pocatello, Idaho, stand in front of their Chevy Cutaway Cargo Box Van at their shop. They started their small plumbing operation in 2007 and have since added directional drilling services.

GOING PLATINUM

Contractor changes direction and adds specialized services to complement his plumbing business

By Ken Wysocky | Photography by William Schaefer



Platinum Plumbing LLC (dba Platinum Directional Drilling), Pocatello, Idaho

OWNERS	J.D. and Tana Christensen
FOUNDED	2007
EMPLOYEES	3
SERVICES	Directional drilling, excavation, service-and-repair plumbing
SERVICE AREA	Southeast Idaho
WEBSITE	www.platinumdrilling.com

J.

D. and Tana Christensen didn't know what to expect when they established their small plumbing company in Pocatello, Idaho, in 2007.

J.D. got into the plumbing field because he had family in the industry and enjoyed the constant variety and the physical aspects of the work. After he graduated from high school, J.D. worked for a plumbing company in Pocatello, where he completed his apprenticeship.

Looking for a change of scenery after working for that company for six years and earning his journeyman's and contractor's license, J.D. left the plumbing field altogether to avoid competing with his former employer. Instead, he embraced the home-construction trade and then became a state plumbing inspector — the youngest one in the state at the time, Tana Christensen says.

"But he hated it — didn't like the office work," Christensen says. So J.D. went back to home construction before eventually founding Platinum Plumbing, so-named because platinum — a dense metal with a high melting point — represents something valued, rare and tough, she explains.

Things started out slow and small, with about 75 jobs the first year, mostly small repairs obtained through word-of-mouth references from family and friends.

"It was very scary because we didn't know anything about starting, owning or running a business," Christensen says. "We did a lot of reading and talking to other business owners who were willing to share information. The Southeast Idaho Small Business Development Center also was very helpful."

J.D. did some rough-in and trim-out plumbing for new-home builders, but soon stopped doing that because it was so time-consuming he couldn't do the kind of small service and repair jobs needed to build a business, she says.

"We were trying to grow a customer base through service work, so being available to do that kind of work was a big deal," she notes.

HEADING UNDERGROUND

The company pivoted in a new direction in 2012 when a customer asked if there was a way to replace a leaking water-service line without disrupting his well-manicured front

◀ Platinum Plumbing owner J.D. Christensen measures a section of pipe that is being installed at a residential job site.





◀ J.D. Christensen disconnects an air hose from the Vermeer pneumatic hole hammer that the team is using during an installation project.

“We get many referrals for jobs that other companies don't want to do because they're technical, messy and hard. People know that if a difficult job has to get done, they know we're going to do it.”

Tana Christensen

yard. J.D. then saw a contractor using a directional drill to install a fiber optic line.

“He asked the contractor if he could hire him to drill a new water-service line,” Tana Christensen says. “He agreed to do it and it worked very well. And J.D. went out and bought a Vermeer directional drill.”

Learning how to use the machine required a “huge” learning curve that included lots of reading, watching YouTube videos and trial and error, she says.

“A month or two after buying it, we lost a 16-inch reamer and four rods in sandy soil in an area north of Pocatello,” Tana Christensen recalls. “The next day we lost a drill head under a garage at a home in Pocatello, about 8 feet underground. Thankfully, we had everything insured and the insurer came through.”

At that point, a discouraged Tana wanted to quit, but J.D. declined, noting the company had too much money invested to turn back.

“Quit just isn't in J.D.'s vocabulary,” she says. “You can't be risk-averse and succeed in this business.”

The takeaways from the experience? Success requires a lot of grit, faith and perseverance, Christensen notes.

“And you need good business insurance,” she adds.

An invaluable employee — Zach Hall — also contributes greatly to the company's growth and success, Christensen says.

“Zach has been pivotal in our growth,” she says. “He is a stellar employee that we are extraordinarily lucky to have. He has grown, changed and emerged with us into the business we are today.”

“That wouldn't be an easy ask for anyone, but he's done it with the same faith and confidence that we've put into the business since the beginning.”

NO TURNING BACK

The fact that directional drilling now generates the majority of the company's revenue underscores the value of pivoting to new markets when opportunity knocks and diversifying services. It also reflects the importance of taking calculated business risks and being the first to invest in advanced technology — such as directional drilling machines and a pipe bursting system — to enter emerging markets.

“It was a big-gulp moment,” says Christensen about the roughly \$40,000 the company, which does business as Platinum Directional Drilling, spent on a D7x11 HDD machine from Vermeer, plus another \$45,000 or so for a Vermeer mud-mixing machine and a flatbed trailer.

“We were into it for around \$85,000 all told,” she continues. “It took a huge leap of faith. But J.D. had every confidence that it would work out. And it did.”

Today, directional drilling generates about 65% of the company's revenue, excavation and pipe bursting

Continued ▶

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◀ Tana Christensen holds the air hose for the Vermeer pneumatic hammer for her husband, J.D., as he operates the equipment from the entry pit.

contributes around 20% and plumbing service and repair work produces the balance. The company's primary services are drilling boreholes for new residential water-service lines, pipe bursting to install new residential sewer laterals and small plumbing repairs.

GAINING TRACTION

Slowly but surely, the company established a customer base. One key to success was being the first business in Southeast Idaho to own a directional drill, as well as the only one to own one for quite a while. Moreover, the high cost deterred competitors from entering the market, Christensen says.

Another boost came from cities that started to replace their mainline water pipes on certain streets — around 20 to 30 houses

Drilling Project Provided Valuable Lesson From School of Hard Knocks

It seems like most contractors encounter an unusually challenging job that either changes the fortunes of their companies or teaches them an important lesson that helps propel the business forward.

For Platinum Directional Drilling, based in Pocatello, Idaho, and owned by J.D. and Tana Christensen, that pivotal project occurred in 2013, around a year after the company morphed from a mostly plumbing-oriented business into a directional drilling firm.

The company won a bid to drill boreholes for 66 residential water-service lines in Idaho Falls. At that point, the Christensens felt they had enough experience to do the job.

"We figured we'd done this enough to handle the project," says Tana Christensen. "In our bid, we said we could finish the job in 45 days."

That confidence diminished a bit when it took three days to drill only 10 feet for the first service line, using the company's second directional drilling machine, a D20x22 unit from Vermeer

Corp. The problem? Solid lava rock — a totally unexpected obstacle, she says.

"The contractor who hired us had dug a test hole, but it happened to be right where there wasn't any rock," Tana Christensen explains.

A Vermeer rep told the Christensens that they needed to use a roller-cone bit to grind through the rock. The bits cost about \$2,500 apiece and wear out quickly; the company ended up buying six, she says.

At times, the Christensens also had to use a duckbill attachment to steer the drill bit and move it back on course, she says.

Fortunately, after drilling boreholes for roughly half of the homes, the rock diminished and gave way to more sandy conditions. Still, it took about 2-1/2 months of 16-hour days, six days a week, to complete the project, Tana Christensen says.

"To say it was the job from hell would be the understatement of the century," she says. "It was awful. ... We didn't see our kids very much for months. But once you start, there's no turning back."



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at a time — and provided affected customers with an allowance to replace their water-services lines at the same time.

“The first job like that came about two years after we bought the drill,” Christensen notes. “Then we bid on one in a town north of Pocatello where the ground was mostly lava rock. We learned so much on that job (see sidebar) that we felt we could build the world after finishing it.

“Those projects were a huge boost for us — they basically jump-started our directional drilling business,” she continues. “No one else had a directional drill and customers loved the fact that we didn’t have to dig up their front yards.”

By now, Christensen estimates the company has drilled boreholes for more than a thousand waterlines.

“We get many referrals for jobs that other companies don’t want to do because they’re technical, messy and hard,” she explains. “People know that if a difficult job has to get done, they know we’re going to do it.”

SUCCESS BEGETS REFERRALS

Performing such work requires a comprehensive array of equipment. The backbone of the business is a Vermeer D23x30 directional drilling machine (30,000 pounds of pullback force and 24,000 pounds of thrust).

The good news: The primary contractor who hired Platinum agreed to pay more to compensate for the extra time on the job.

“We didn’t make as much money as we thought we would, but it still was a profitable job,” she says.

Furthermore, the couple learned a few valuable lessons: Avoid drilling work in Idaho Falls. Provide two bids on all projects – one for rocky conditions and one for non-rocky conditions. And buy a bigger directional drilling machine, which the company did when it invested in a Vermeer D23x30 (30,000 pounds of pullback force and 24,000 pounds of thrust).

“Plus we now know how to work better in rocky conditions,” Christensen notes. “In this business, you learn something new every day.”

Plumber Profile



- ◀ Technician Charli Christensen unspools the water line and feeds it to her father, J.D.,. The team is installing the new waterline to a new home project.
- ▶ Technician Zach Hall measures and cuts a drain pipe during the shower installation.



“Pipe bursting jobs really picked up last year. ... There are a lot of aging Orangeburg pipe laterals that are starting to fail around here.”

Tana Christensen

The company also has invested in a Vermeer mud-mixing system to mix drilling mud; an LP555 industrial vacuum truck built by Vac-Tron Equipment and used for excavating in smaller, hard-to-access areas; Bobcat E45 and E88 mini-excavators; a Ford F-650 dump truck with a dump bed made by Scelzi Enterprises; a Vermeer mini skid-steer; two 14-foot Iron Bull dump trailers made by Norstar; and two flatbed trailers from Felling Trailers.

The company also relies on a Portaburst pipe bursting system from HammerHead Trenchless; a Vermeer hole hammer piercing tool; pipeline-inspection cameras from Milwaukee Tool and RIDGID; a DigiTrak F5 locator from Digital Control; a Chevrolet cut-away box van with a box body made by Supreme Corp.; and two Dodge pickup trucks (3500s).

The company also uses Housecall Pro business-management software for invoicing customers.

The Portaburst pipe bursting system, purchased about three years ago, enabled the company to further diversify its services. It all started when customers started asking

if the company could do trenchless sewer lateral replacements.

At the time, J.D. still did conventional open-cut line replacements. But then he encountered one customer with an unusually deep sewer line and a lot of trees in the yard.

“So we bought the Portaburst pipe-bursting system (HammerHead), which by now has turned into another primary source of revenue,” J.D. Christensen says. “Pipe bursting jobs really picked up last year. ... There are a lot of aging Orangeburg pipe laterals that are starting to fail around here.”

SUCCESSFUL CONVERSION

Does Tana ever look back and marvel at how far the company has come since it bought its first HDD machine?

“I sure do,” she says. “It’s astounding. We basically went from nothing to a full-fledged business — it’s crazy.”

“Some days it feels like a great success,” she continues. “Buy on other days, it feels like a huge burden” because what we now pay monthly in bills is more than all the money we made in our first year in business.

“So with that level of liabilities, you have to carefully decide what you want for your business — find that balance between growing and standing pat — knowing where to put on the brakes.”

The couple would like to keep growing, but like so many contractors today, it’s difficult to find the employees needed to do that — people with good work ethics and a willingness to adhere to high standards for customer service and quality work, Tana Christensen says.

Continued ▶

“THE PROFITABILITY OF PIPE LINING HAS BEEN A HUGE PART OF OUR SUCCESS.”

Profile NuFlow Certified Contractor

When Greg Copas and Spencer Drake opened Big Cat Plumbing, they wanted to run things differently than their previous employer. One of those differences was adding pipe lining to their list of services, so they called NuFlow.

“The biggest reason why we went with Nuflow is because of the support that we got from the very beginning.”

Now entering their third year in business, the duo couldn't be happier with their choice.

“The profitability of pipe lining has been a huge part of our success. It's allowed us to invest in more equipment and hire more people.”

While adding pipe lining was a great tool to add to their portfolio, they agree that choosing the right partner was also an important factor.

“Absolutely do it, but make sure you do it with a company like NuFlow because of the support they offer. We wouldn't have landed some of the bigger jobs and wouldn't be as successful getting the projects done if it wasn't for their support. The most valuable thing about NuFlow is contacting someone directly and getting a response right away.”



Greg Copas and Spencer Drake,,
Big Cat Plumbing, Southern Colorado

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SCAN ME



Plumber Profile



▲ The team at Platinum Plumbing LLC includes, from left, owners J.D. and Tana Christensen, and technicians Charli Christensen and Zach Hall. The four stand in their company shop in Pocatello, Idaho.

“We’re in a kind of in-between mode right now,” she says. “We’re trying to decide if we want to grow and hire people, then weed them out as best we can and then add another service truck, or stay where we are, which is working just fine.

“But overall, we’d like to grow the company,” she continues. “In the beginning, J.D.’s goal was to provide for our family. Now he’d like to help provide for other families.”



Featured Equipment

Bobcat Corporate
800-743-4340
www.bobcat.com

Milwaukee Tool
800-729-3878
www.milwaukeetool.com

Digital Control, Inc.
800-288-3610
www.digitrak.com

RIDGID
800-474-3443
www.RIDGID.com

Felling Trailers, Inc.
866-213-2948
www.felling.com

Supreme Corporation
800-642-4889
www.supremecorp.com

HammerHead Trenchless
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hammerheadtrenchless.com

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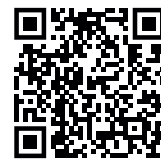
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Jill Johnson

Finding Creative Staffing Solutions

A valued frontline crew, on-call temp workers and even way-out technology may help you cope with chronic staffing shortages

By Jill Johnson

It's no secret that staffing shortages facing most businesses today are extremely challenging. It is also highly unlikely that these challenges are going to resolve in the near term. So, what do you do now when you just cannot find the talent you need? It is time to rethink all of your staffing options. The key is to make the most of the staff you have and to augment them with outside resources and technology.

1. Prioritize frontline, customer-facing employees

The foundation of business success is based upon your revenue and the stability of your revenue streams. Customer loyalty and retention depends on their satisfaction. Prospects rely on their ability to access the information they need to make informed decisions and gain a comfort level with their options. Organizations with a history of sales success often rely on operational delivery to keep them going when they are short staffed. Yet it is your customer-facing staff who are the most valuable to sustaining revenue.

Identify staff who interact with your customers from the phone call order for septic service to the technician's visit to invoicing for the work performed. Their success in meeting customer needs, satisfaction and prospect demands determine if you can satisfy and keep them. If frontline workers have the bandwidth to provide exceptional service, they can keep your customers and expand your prospect pool.

Technology and automation use is exploding as companies seek opportunities to invest in devices and software that provide options to leverage the staff they already have and enhance productivity.

Today's consumers are looking for faster information. Many prefer to get information via video or audio. Adjust to how they want to consume information. Streamline your team's workload by creating tools and resources to quickly get them the answers they want and need. Ensure they have the tools and resources to be more efficient. Clarify what can help them deliver a better customer experience. Remove the roadblocks to their success.

2. Outsource when necessary

The gig economy is here to stay, and that may be true in the wastewater industry as it is in the technology sector, for instance. Leveraging external relationships with outsourced resources — say for day laborers or retired or other independent contractors — can help you flex your staffing and can be a valuable way to get the work done. While not as optimal as building your own team, the pressure relief you experience can give you the breathing room needed to determine if you really need more full-time technicians or some of your work can be routinely outsourced.

For small projects — especially for office tasks like IT, website development or marketing — online resources like Fiverr and Upwork provide you with worldwide access to gig workers with specific skills that are needed in the short term. Most of these online sites have filters allowing you to clarify what service you need, information ahead of time on the potential cost, control over where your talent comes from and what languages they speak.

Staffing agencies can bring workers for large, sporadic projects requiring more hands. While it will be more expensive, keep in mind, you are not paying any benefits and you will not get hit with an unemployment claim when you no longer need them. Agencies vet the staff who work with you and will help you find the right workers you need.

Outside vendors can provide key services for you and do bookkeeping, administrative work, sales support and social media. Long-term vendors have deep insight about

your history, your team and your company's culture. They know your preferred communication methods and how you like to work. Outside vendors are an exceptionally valuable safety valve when you cannot find the right permanent talent.

Do not try to manage too many different outside resources. Focus on the most critical work they can provide for you and engage in short-duration tests to see if you have chemistry and if they provide you with value.

3. Consider the potential of technology

Technology and automation use is exploding as companies seek opportunities to invest in devices and software that provide options to leverage the staff they already have and enhance productivity. Autonomous devices include robots, drones, vehicles, floor cleaners and more. These devices can sense the environment around them and operate without human involvement. Other devices such as exoskeletons are able to support a worker's body and provide augmented biological capabilities such as safely lifting heavy objects.

While robotics as a field is advancing, they are not truly autonomous of human interaction. They still need people involved in the process to use them. This includes programming, monitoring them and changing batteries as they perform their service. At best this is now "co-botics" and people will never be fully eliminated from the equation and they will work in tandem. As these options expand, you can take advantage of them too, even if you are a small business.

There is growing interest in how data and analytics can be used to manage staff productivity and service delivery. Most technology devices are already collecting data. When combined in the future with artificial intelligence, the possibilities for data analytics appear to be endless. When the data is combined with AI interpretation, this can provide valuable insight to help streamline your processes and maximize staff efficiency.

Evaluate how you are using the software and technology currently deployed in your business to see how you can maximize their value. The return on the investment should be carefully evaluated to identify any efficiencies achieved or productivity enhancements. Get your team any needed training so they can effectively work with advanced technologies. You might need a different skill set in your workforce to work with the technology and this may expand

your workforce to pull from a broader pool of potential talent.

IN CONCLUSION

It is clear that staffing shortages are not going away. We have to find opportunities to gain increased productivity from our existing workforce and alternatives for completing the work we need done. Focusing on the needs of our customer-facing team members, making smart use of outside resources and maximizing technology use provide viable options for addressing the issue. When you expand your potential for getting the job done, you are more likely to find the resources you need. 📧

Jill J. Johnson is a speaker, author and president and founder of Johnson Consulting Services. Reach her at www.jcs-usa.com.

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Residential Plumbing, Water Quality and Conditioning

By Craig Mandli

Coatings/Linings/Sealants

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Flow-Liner Systems Neofit+Plus Expandable Pressure Pipe

Neofit+Plus Expandable Pressure Pipe from Flow-Liner Systems is a trenchless technology that creates an impenetrable barrier between drinking water and the existing host pipe. Host pipes (like lead and copper) can leach dangerous levels of toxic materials in your drinking water. The Neofit+Plus EPP structural material has been scientifically proven by examining extensive hydrolysis testing, indicating it will last well over 100 years. It often only requires a single small access pit, saving yards, trees, sidewalks and floors from demolition. The speedy process allows for many installations a day and immediate return to service. **800-348-0020; www.flow-liner.com**



FORMADRAIN Formapox 101

Formapox 101 from FORMADRAIN is a durable steam-cured liner that eliminates the mess and cost of traditional dig-and-replace methods. It is made from a watertight, thin, yet extremely strong composite material and a specially formulated resin. The liner is bright blue in color. It is the mainstay of the company's pushed- or pulled-in-place, steam-cured, fiberglass and epoxy underground pipe repair system. It can be used in line sizes from 2 to 48 inches. The repair is so thin that pipes sustain their original flow capacities, even with a liner installed in such small diameters. **888-337-6764; www.formadrain.com**



Oatey Hercules Megatape

Hercules Megatape from Oatey is a gray, all-purpose, professional-grade PTFE thread-sealing tape designed for use on a wide variety of threaded pipes. The tape is 3.5 mil thick, and seals threads on virtually any piping system, including stainless steel pipe, cast iron, PVC, CPVC and ABS pipe, brass and chrome fittings, and gas connections with less rips/tears and fewer wraps. It is available in 1/2-, 3/4- and 1-inch widths. **800-321-9532; www.oatey.com**



Controls/Control Panels

Uponor Smatrix Pulse

The Smatrix Pulse multizone wireless controller for radiant and air-side comfort from Uponor is a new dimension of smart home technology that offers wireless control of radiant heating and cooling along with forced-air heating and cooling in multiple zones throughout a home.



Homeowners can enjoy precise comfort with one solution that connects to a smart home assistant and can also be controlled remotely via an app. **800-321-4739; www.uponor.com**

Drains

1916 Collection Universal Freestanding Tub Drain

The **1916 Collection Universal Freestanding Tub Drain** works with freestanding and island center and offset tubs. When installed at rough-in, it provides simple installation between the P-trap and tub — without needing access from below the floor. Available in ABS, PVC or cast iron with a plastic or stainless steel flange, this drain is compatible with brass or Schedule 40 tailpieces. **800-321-9532; www.lrbrands.com**



Jones Stephens LevelBest Drainage System

The **LevelBest Drainage System** from **Jones Stephens** ensures a clean, professional installation every time. The system's design allows for adjusting height both before and after the concrete is poured, with no chipping or chiseling necessary. Features include a domed top for protection during the concrete pour and heavy-duty nickel bronze trim. The system is primer tapped and can be used with tile rings. Clean-outs include a countersunk test plug. Available in 3-by-4-inch and 4-inch sizes, configuring the right drainage system for the job is quick and easy. Simply choose the rough-in and trim style or select from pre-configured complete system options to have everything packaged together neatly in one box. **800-355-6637; www.jonesstephens.com**



Watco Innovator Shower Drain

Watco's Innovator Shower Drain is a receptor-type drain for preformed shower bases. It features the Innovator orange test membrane, testable to 22 psi, which eliminates the need for test balls, caps or plugs. It includes a heavy-duty, snap-on grid strainer that is 20% thicker than competitive grids. The grid is available in four finishes. Plumbers appreciate the E-Z grip



installation tabs on the top piece and the squared-off ribs on the bottom receptor to aid tightening and installation. It includes a green, polycarbonate cover to protect the grid finish and prevent debris from entering the drain during construction. **800-821-8576; www.watcomfg.com**

Faucets

PRIER Products Lead-Free Small Valve Line



The **Lead-Free Small Valve Line** from **PRIER Products** is available with an internal vacuum breaker on select models. They are superior in design and composition and certified to NSF 372 and ASSE 1011. Additionally, the plumbing brass utilizes a solid brass operating stem, cast metal handle assembly with brass mounting screw, and a packing nut instead of a fragile O-ring seal for years of dependable life without the headache of trying to replace a damaged O-ring. Small valve options including the 33 Series No-kink Hose Bibb, 34 Series Sillcock, 44 Series Hose Bibb, a 526 Series Boiler Drain and a 533 Garden Valve. **800-362-9055; www.prier.com**

Filtration Equipment/Systems

Eclipse Tools North America BoilerMag

Eliminating contaminants in any hydronics system is vital to maximizing its heating efficiency. **BoilerMag** from **Eclipse Tools North America** offers the complete hydronic system protection, with a three-step solution: clean, protect and inhibit, using a range of quality system treatment products and chemicals. A magnetic filter is a vital means of controlling magnetite, also known as black sludge, in hydronic systems. In order to prevent problems caused by black sludge, it must be filtered out before reaching the boiler. The magnetic core ensures no matter the amount of contamination, the unit will never block. Complete with an automatic air vent, it releases trapped air in order to maintain heating efficiency and prevent oxidation. If you experience a high number of callbacks due to blocked systems, installing the unit can extend the life of the boiler and reduce time-consuming maintenance. **905-664-5585; www.boilermag.com**



Fittings

A.Y. McDonald RANGER Fitting

A.Y. McDonald's RANGER fitting not only saves the user time, but also allows them to do more with less. The design enables it to assemble onto multiple ranges of nominal pipe diameters from CTS up to PEP and is applicable for underground and aboveground potable water systems. To date, many additional size and product options have been added to the RANGER offering, allowing customers to get even more from this solution. The 2-inch size comes in model numbers 74753-11, 74754-11, and 74758-11. This makes the range available in 3/4-, 1-, 1 1/4-, 1 1/2-, and 2-inch sizes. **800-292-2737; www.aymcdonald.com**



Chicago Fittings X-Riser

With the use of the Chicago Fittings' X-Riser system, gas is distributed from main to meter, meter to appliance, or propane tank to house with a solid (jointless) underground pipe. This solution is offered for either natural gas or propane applications, available in semi-rigid or full-flex options, and comes in different PE sizes and outlets. Combining this philosophy with the long list of features and benefits of the Sealastic sealing technology makes the X-Riser a reliable, safe and cost-effective method for gas piping systems. **877-638-9009; www.chicagofittings.com**



REHAU, Building Solutions Division EVERLOC+

Designed for use with RAUPEX UV shield PEXa pipe in potable water applications, the EVERLOC+ compression-sleeve fitting system from REHAU, Building Solutions Division features both polymer and lead-free brass fittings in diameters up to 2 inches, as well as the EVERLOC+ power tool. Connections are made using a two-step expansion and compression process, both performed by the power tool. First, the pipe is expanded, then the sleeve is actively compressed over the pipe and fitting for a secure connection that is immediately ready for pressure testing. The fitting



system includes couplings, tees, elbows, transition fittings, multiport tees and accessories in sizes from 3/8 through 2 inches. **800-247-9445; www.everlocplus.com**

SharkBite Max

SharkBite Max push-to-connect fittings feature key enhancements for stronger, faster and better connections. A stainless-steel retainer can withstand double the burst pressure of the original fitting, and the re-designed body requires half of the insertion effort compared to the first-generation design. The fittings are compatible with PEX, copper, CPVC, PE-RT and HDPE pipe and require no special tools. Plus, they no longer need a tube liner for PEX connections. They can be installed in wet or dry lines and are approved for underground burial (with burial wrapping) and behind-the-wall applications. **877-700-4242; www.sharkbite.com**



Viega MegaPressG

MegaPressG from Viega is a safe, fast and clean way to connect gas pipes. Made from carbon steel alloy with corrosion-resistant zinc nickel coating, it is available in sizes and configurations from 1/2 to 4 inches. It is approved for more applications than any other carbon steel press fitting system, including underground use, and has an HNBR sealing element for fuels and gasses. The graphite separator ring is engineered to withstand high temperatures. Available configurations include elbows, couplings, no-stop couplings, reducers, tees, reducing tees, adapters, reducing adapters, unions, caps and flanges. It helps keep job sites cleaner with no threading oils or other products. Connections can be made in 16 seconds or less, saving up to 90% on labor costs. The flameless connection eliminates the need for hot work permits or a fire watch, meaning other trades can work simultaneously and safely. **800-976-9819; www.viega.us**



Vista Water Group VIAgap

VIAgap from Vista Water Group is a certified plumbing water fitting designed to prevent backsiphonage while receiving a single drainline from various types of appliances and devices, including reverse osmosis systems, water softeners, whole house water filters, medical devices, condensate lines and overflow lines. Available in multiple sizes and constructed with an integrated straightening vein that virtually eliminates splashing, all models are certified to meet ASME A112.1.3 and IAPMO PS 65 air gap standards, as well as NSF 61 and 372 materials standards. Designed to accommodate multiple installation options, models feature integrated barb fittings on both inlets and outlets, and can be installed with included wall-mountable clips or directly into a standpipe or full inline pipe mount with couplings. For similar applications that require air gaps for multiple drainlines, the DrainGap Multi-Port Drain Adapter with Air Gap is also available. 419-565-5702; www.vistawatergroup.com



Fixtures

Aquaguard WAGS Valve

WAGS Valves from Aquaguard can stop a leaking water heater tank from continuously refilling and dripping, or until the tank fails catastrophically. The shut-off valve halts the incoming water supply, and on gas-fired units, shuts off the gas supply to ensure the home's safety from water heater failure. They are mechanically operated; meaning no maintenance, no electricity or no battery checks are required. They sit in a drip pan under the water heater and are activated when leaking water accumulates to a predetermined level in the pan. Once activated, the industrial-duty, one-shot safety valve shuts off the water and gas supply if so equipped. A red tab pops out to indicate valve activation. 844-438-9247; www.wagsvalve.com



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Shower



in2aqua PS - Retro

The **in2aqua PS - Retro** shower system offers a simple renovation solution for the bathroom. A complete system with a shower head and multifunction hand shower, the system allows you to upgrade a bathroom without major renovation, converting a shower head system to a two-way system with the benefit of an extra hand shower. Compatible with any CALGreen or max 2.5 gpm shower head and head spray, it offers plug-and-play functionality, and is compact and modern, featuring a contemporary, organic design. Finish options include chrome, brushed nickel and matte black. It is a part of the Performance Shower Line featuring advanced multiport ceramic disc valve diverters combined with high-performance thermostatic valves. Its in2itiv mounting system saves installation costs and reduces sound transfer to the back wall. **800-257-6051; www.in2aqua.com**

Sump Pumps



Ashland Pump sump pumps

Ashland Pump offers sump pumps in different options including the PS series, B series, the SPV series and sump basin package systems. The pumps are built of corrosion-resistant anodized aluminum or rugged cast iron construction. All are equipped with permanent split capacitors, continuous duty-rated motors for higher efficiency. They have an upper and lower ball bearing design for longer life and smoother operation. The vortex impellers are made of thermoplastic or cast iron to better handle up to 1/2-inch solids. They have professional, contractor grade vertical or wide-angle piggy-back float switches for quick and easy field servicing. The sump basin packages come complete with the sump basin, sump pump, check valve and discharge piping. They are suitable for new or replacement installations. **855-281-6830; www.ashlandpump.com**

Zoeller Pump Aquanot Fit 508

A simple notification of a high-water event or a control panel alarm can typically provide enough advance warning to investigate the site and prevent equipment or property damage. For most residential applications, smart **Zoeller Pumps** will also self-test and use alternate battery power, reducing issues normally associated with dormant standby backup equipment. The **Aquanot Fit 508** is a battery backup sump pump that can activate for whatever reason sump water is not being evacuated. This might be because of power outage, failed equipment or high incoming volume. If a basement can benefit from notification or remote control, testing and diagnostics of crucial pump equipment, then the Aquanot Fit 508, or perhaps simply a connected APak high-water alarm may be a simple, inexpensive solution. **800-928-7867; www.zoellerpumps.com**



Toilets

Niagara Shadow

Niagara's Shadow 0.8 gpf with Stealth Technology toilet is ideal for apartments, condos, single-family residential and hotels. Built for satisfaction, this product has a comfortable elongated bowl, is ADA-compliant, and comes with either a left or right handle. Additionally, the line is WaterSense and MaP certified. Builders and plumbing professionals also find the convenience of its pre-assembled tank easy to install. Because there is no tank assembly, PROs install toilets quickly and efficiently, leaving little room for error. The line also offers an extra-large footprint, easily covering old tile and making installation quick, fast and efficient. **833-812-0908; pro.niagaracorp.com**



Saniflo Sanicompact

An innovative product to consider for half bathroom installations is the Sanicompact from Saniflo, a combination of a vitreous china toilet bowl and macerating flush system built into a single, compact fixture that will fit into even the tightest of spaces. Because it is a lower-profile toilet, this stylishly shaped product is specially designed to address the inconvenience brought on by disabilities or aging. It is also ADA-certified as a comfort height toilet. **800-363-5874; www.saniflo.com**



Tools

Milwaukee Tool TRAPSAKE 25-foot Auger with CABLE DRIVE

Milwaukee Tool's TRAPSAKE 25-foot Auger with CABLE DRIVE is part of the company's interchangeable powered auger system. The auger's in-line design allows for easy access to drainlines through the fixture. Its CABLE DRIVE automatically feeds and retracts to quickly reach and remove blockages in sink, bathtub and shower drainlines. It is compatible with the M12 TRAPSAKE Driver, delivering power and speed to



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work through tough clogs in tight traps. With optimized electronics, it is engineered to protect delicate porcelain fixtures while also allowing users to feel when engaged with a blockage. **800-729-3878; www.milwaukeeetool.com**

RIDGID Straight Pipe Wrenches

In the trades, tools take a beating. Yet, many of the same **RIDGID Straight Pipe Wrenches** that were first used by plumbers in 1923 are still in the hands of residential and commercial plumbers today. The heavy-duty straight pipe wrench features a sturdy, ductile-iron housing and an I-beam handle. A fully floating forged hook jaw includes self-cleaning threads with replaceable hook and heel jaws. A lightweight aluminum model is also available. The iron straight pipe wrench ranges in size from 6 to 60 inches and the aluminum model from 10 to 48 inches. **800-769-7743; www.ridgid.com**



high-quality quartz tubes to heat water to a comfortable temperature when there is water demand. As the water is exiting the unit, ozone gas is injected into the water. This not only kills the bacteria in water, but the ozone is also carried in the water to the faucets and kills the bacteria present within the faucet valve seats and aerators. The result is good, clean, safe and efficiently heated water, ensuring a building and its occupants are protected from waterborne bacteria illnesses. **877-835-1705; www.intellihot.com**

Noritz EZ Series

The **EZ Series** from **Noritz** delivers substantial energy savings and lower monthly fuel bills. It offers a Uniform Energy Factor of 0.96. The exchangers consist of two types of high-grade stainless steel: one with a higher tensile strength material resistant to heat shock and cracking and the other that extracts latent heat from the combustion process, resulting in resistance to corrosion and scale buildup. Steady BTU Mode eliminates concerns over high incoming water temperatures, while its burner-control technology reduces the effective minimum input by more than two-thirds whenever incoming water temperatures approach 90 degrees F. A fully integrated non-return valve streamlines common venting for up to two heaters and can also direct-vent with extended vent lengths. **714-433-2905; www.noritz.com**



Water Heaters



Heat-Flo High Output

The **Heat-Flo High Output** indirect series of tanks are available in 60-, 80- and 115-gallon capacities. The body of the tank, the oversized heat transfer coil and even the cold-water inlet (dip tube) are made of high quality 316L stainless steel. All the piping connections are on the top of the tank, making the installation easy and cost effective. The finished tank is jacketed with dent- and rust-resistant HDPE plastic and is highly insulated to minimize standby heat loss. Although initially designed for high outputs of domestic hot water, today's efficiency demands have found these tanks commonly paired with lower approach temperatures from air-to-water heat pumps and high efficiency boilers. **508-278-2400; www.heat-flo.com**

Rheem ProTerra Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater

Rheem's ProTerra Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater is available in a variety of sizes (40, 50, 65 and 80 gallon) with the same footprint as a standard electric water heater, making it an ideal replacement solution. With zero-clearance requirements and front-facing components, the unit easily fits into small spaces and improves serviceability. Built-in EcoNet Wi-Fi technology provides advanced diagnostics to deliver service faster. They offer immediate energy savings and are eligible for federal tax credits and local utility incentives. **866-339-2388; www.rheem.com**



Intellihot Legionator

The **Legionator** point-of-use disinfection tankless water heater from **Intellihot** significantly reduces the potential for *Legionella* at the point-of-use using water heating technology that includes a built-in ozone generator and quartz scale-free heating. It uses a set of



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Residential Plumbing, Water Quality and Conditioning

By Craig Mandli

Frostproof outdoor faucet integrates seamlessly into A-frame aesthetic



Problem: When building her modern A-frame cabin, a Canadian homeowner was concerned about the potential of freezing pipes while selecting a hose bibb. In the past she dealt with draining her home's pipes to winterize every year, as well as a persistent leaky faucet; she did not want to deal with the hassle of replacing O-rings annually. She wanted to choose an outdoor faucet that would also blend in with the minimalist, monochromatic exterior of her cabin — most hose bibs are clunky and an eyesore, with limited finish options available.

Solution: After conferring with her plumber, the homeowner installed two **Aquor Water Systems House Hydrants**. The 316L marine-grade stainless steel hydrants automatically drain and winterize in mere seconds upon disconnection and are frostproof tested down to -30 degrees F. Simply unplug the included hose connector and you're good to go! The matte black finish blends in effortlessly with the dark siding of her cabin, making the sleek flush-mount faucet hard to spot.

Result: The homeowner didn't have to compromise on her cabin's aesthetics, and she doesn't have to worry about draining her pipes every year to avoid frozen, potentially burst plumbing. There are no unsightly foam covers, and no pesky leaks either. Whether she wants to fill a bucket using the removable faucet hose connector, or top off her wood-fired hot tub with an ultralight garden hose, she can now enjoy easy, year-round water access. **800-458-1749; www.aquorwatersystems.com**

Alarm protects commercial and residential property from sewage backups



Problem: A residential owner needed a way to receive an alarm prior to a sewer backup occurring in his home. He had two sewer backups into his basement due to root intrusion into his lateral line and was overwhelmed with the cost of cleaning and disinfecting his basement. His basement was partially finished for his children.

Solution: Owners of multiple commercial properties and single homes recognize that they need a way to be alerted if damaging blackwater starts to back up into their home or buildings. They decided to install an alarm system that attaches easily to the basement clean-out. The **Blackwater Alert** is a 95-decibel alarm that notifies occupants and property management before septic or sewer waste enters the property. It can send an alert to your Alexa, security system or smart device (iPhone and Android) to indicate that a backup is occurring. It has a port release valve that allows for the controlled release of pressure in the plumbing pipes, making clean-up less extensive. The device protects the property from damage from waste overflowing into a basement, tub, shower or other fixture.

Result: Blackwater Alert allows property management peace of mind that there will be an alarm alerting them to act in the case of an impending sewage backup. The device has saved the owners thousands in cleaning and repairs. **800-804-4725; www.blackwateralert.com**

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Sump pump specified for home that continuously burns out larger pumps



Problem: A midwestern homeowner had replaced his 1 hp sump pump every couple of years, and the lack of reliability on a pump that didn't have to work that hard was concerning. Every pump was only pumping water out a few feet and would only run a few seconds each cycle.

Solution: The homeowner reached out to a plumber, who explained that the 1 hp pump was oversized for the job. The larger pump required short cycles for the small basin, and it was using extra energy because it wasn't pumping very high. The plumber recommended the **Little Giant 6EC Series 1/3 hp** sump pump from **Franklin Electric**. The hybrid sump/effluent pump creates a permanent line of defense against water damage in the home. It also features 1/2-inch solids handling.

Result: The Little Giant 6EC offered a better size for low and longer run times, which was more appropriate for the job, and helped keep the pump cool. This lower operating temperature also improved pump life, assuring the homeowner did not have to worry about frequent pump failures or replacement. **844-250-4982; www.littlegiant.com**

Condensing combi-boiler used to upgrade home's hot water system



Problem: Bridget Behrens, along with her husband, two sons and two dogs, live in a lovely home in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin that was built in the 1940s. Much like the age of the house, the large floor-standing boiler and tank water heater were stuck in the old days. Bridget's family was waiting up to 5 minutes for hot water to get to the shower, and after the two boys were done with their showers, Bridget and her husband had to decide who was getting a cold shower once the tank was out of hot water. Beyond the hot water, Bridget was looking for a way to free up space in the basement and bring their gas bills down.

Solution: Ogborn Plumbing took out the large boiler and tank water heater and replaced them with one wall-hanging **Navien NCB-250/150H** condensing combi-boiler to provide high-efficiency heating and endless hot water for the whole house, and added a **NaviCirc** recirculation valve to help water get to each fixture much faster.

Result: The 95% AFUE NCB-H condensing combi-boiler keeps the family warm during the snowy winters in Wisconsin and they never have to fight over who is getting a hot shower. The multiple recirculation options on the NCB-H combined with the NaviCirc valve allowed Bridget to schedule the DHW recirculation for the family's needs and still keep their gas bills lower than when they had the old system. Finally, the sleek wall-hung design of the NCB-H was able to free up almost a whole corner in their basement. **800-519-8794; www.navieninc.com**

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Plumber adds protection to curb theft



Problem: One night a Virginia plumber had two of their vehicles broken into, with thousands of dollars worth of equipment stolen. Even though the plumber took steps to protect their fleet, the thieves were one step ahead. In seconds, the thieves ground a handle in half while leaving the padlock untouched, and quickly lifted the roll-up door.

Solution: **Thunderbolt Anti-theft Deadbolt Locks** were used to fortify the company's vans and box trucks with internal steel deadbolts that thieves cannot see, cut or tamper with from the exterior. These internal locks can fit any van door or roll-up door. The deadbolts engage and secure the doors with a button push from your factory key fob or a Thunderbolt remote controller. Thunderbolt also offers the Lightning Bolt, which will lock a roll-up door in seconds. It is inconspicuous, easily installs in less than 15 minutes, and is effective in stopping thieves from opening the door.


Result: Deadbolt Locks provided the superior protection the plumber needed to protect their tools, equipment and livelihood. 765-652-6587; www.thunderboltlocks.com

Plumber builds outdoor kitchen with above-ground drainage thanks to gray water pump



Problem: New Jersey plumbing contractor Christopher Gonzalez needed to provide drainage for a homeowner's outdoor sink and dishwasher. The challenge was finding a product that could handle harsh winters without needing to break the concrete.

Solution: Since Gonzalez was looking for a pump with a heavy-duty compact design that could be discreetly concealed beneath the sink, **Saniflo's** technical team recommended the **Saniswift Pro**. The installer-friendly design also features a pair of 2-inch low inlets with time-saving, built-in check valves, one on either side of the unit. These side inlets are positioned lower than those found on conventional drain pumps, further easing installation. Once connected the graywater from the sink or dishwasher enters the unit, a pressure switch activates the pump motor. Once the water is discharged, the pressure switch deactivates the unit — until the next time drainage enters the unit. The immediate removal of the waste helps eliminate unwanted odors. If the system needs servicing, it can be done without disconnecting any piping to the unit. The top cover has two removable screws providing ready access to the internal electrical components, motor and impeller. When it comes time to winterize the kitchen, the pump can be easily disconnected and brought inside.

Result: According to Gonzalez, the entire installation, including running the drain piping from the fixtures, took about three hours. From previous experience installing Saniflo products, he says he's confident that the homeowner will enjoy their outdoor kitchen. 800-363-5874; www.saniflo.com 

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Planning for Electric

What to consider when thinking about converting your plumbing fleet to electric *By The Utility Expo staff*

The greening of U.S. vehicle fleets is already underway, as already seen at the last Utility Expo in 2021. The U.S. has committed to reducing greenhouse gas pollution 50-52% from 2005 levels, and with electric utility production accounting for 25% of those emissions, utilities are under pressure to turn to cleaner sources of energy. Electrifying their fleets is just another step in their overall plan to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations.

Southern California Edison was recently recognized by the Smart Electric Power Alliance for their progress in transforming to a carbon-free electricity sector and named to their 2023 Utility Transformation Leaderboard. They have already taken important steps to electrify a significant portion of their fleet, which comprises more than 6,700 assets — approximately 5,000 vehicles, 1,000 trailers and 700 off-road assets.

Todd Carlson, SCE Principal Manager of Fleet Asset Management, outlined their ambitious goals. “SCE seeks to lean into electrification opportunities and must be aggressive to meet proposed California air quality and greenhouse gas reduction goals associated with the proposed California Advanced Clean Fleet rule,” says Carlson. “SCE plans to have 90% of our light-duty vehicles electrified by the end of 2025 and 100% by 2030. That same year, we also expect to exceed 30% of our medium-duty and 10% of our heavy-duty.”

SCE’s electrification journey offers leaders insights to consider for your own fleet transformation, even if it’s just a small plumbing operation.

SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM INDUSTRY GROUPS

According to Carlson, SCE partnered with the other members of the Edison Electric Institute when developing initial public 2030 EV targets in 2020.

“It was helpful to have an industry group assist in leading the initiative,” says Carlson. “Also, as a California

“Our EVs that replaced gas vehicles have very favorable maintenance outcomes.”
Todd Carlson

fleet, we are active in commenting on proposals from our regulators who are attempting to address local air quality concerns.”

Other resources on fleet electrification are available from the American Association of Public Power and SEFA.

CREATE A ROADMAP

SCE used a telematics fleet assessment to outline vehicles targeted to be replaced by EVs, where they park and how long they have to charge. This was used to calculate the charger size required at each facility by year.

“We collaborated with our facilities team on a construction plan to install the infrastructure and chargers needed for the next five to 15 years at each site,” says Carlson. Each site has its own project plan.

CONSIDER TIME AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS FOR EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure lead times and budgets are particularly important considerations. “Construction is costly and you may need to cut concrete or asphalt across a parking lot or add a new panel or switchgear,” says Carlson.

In addition, SCE had to contend with a small number of sites that were circuit constrained and required the utility to complete a circuit upgrade. Other conditions that required longer lead times include new to-the-meter service drops when switchgear is required.

EV infrastructure charging costs across 240 projects was recently published by ICF, a global advisory and

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technology services provider. This information can be useful in budgeting.

TAP INTO FEDERAL AND STATE INCENTIVES

Both federal and state incentives can help offset costs for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure. Refer to the U.S. Department of Energy website for a list of incentives, laws and regulations, funding opportunities and other federal initiatives related to electric vehicles. SCE was able to tap into both sources for its electrification efforts.

PREPARE A BUSINESS CASE FOR EVS

Beyond meeting air quality and carbon emission goals, a strong business case can help companies build consensus and commitment to change. At SCE, the business case for electric pickups and ePTO bucket trucks is supported by the high cost of gasoline and diesel fuel in California.

Expect lower maintenance costs to be part of the value proposition for electric vehicles. "Our EVs that replaced gas vehicles have very favorable maintenance outcomes,"

says Carlson. "And our traditional hybrid vehicles have also had good maintenance outcomes over the last 10 years."

TAKE DRIVER OPINIONS INTO ACCOUNT

Carlson recommends surveying your current drivers to assess if they are excited, neutral or opposed to replacing their fleet vehicle with an EV. "Ask your drivers if they own an EV or if they have ever driven an EV for context as a starting point for organizational change management," says Carlson. "The EVs often sell themselves because drivers like the quiet operation and reduced job site emissions."

According to Carlson, providing test or demo units to drivers often results in drivers asking, "When can I get one?"

PREPARE FOR EXPECTED ISSUES

According to Carlson, product availability is the biggest issue in the electrification of the fleet, and not just medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. "Even the exploding

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pickup truck space has been hit by availability and production constraints,” he says.

Once SCE achieves full-scale adoption of EV work trucks, portable chargers and robust public charging for storm support and emergencies will be required. However, Carlson doesn’t see portable charging solutions as a current constraint for EV work truck adoption.

There’s a lot to consider when electrifying your fleet but because fleets like SCE are sharing how they plan to reach their goals, it’s making electrification easier not only for all utilities but for their commercial customers as well. **P**

The Utility Expo is the largest event for utility professionals and construction contractors seeking comprehensive insights into the latest industry technologies, innovations and trends. The biennial trade show, known for equipment test drives and interactive product demonstrations, takes place in Louisville, Kentucky. The next edition will be Sept. 26-28, 2023.

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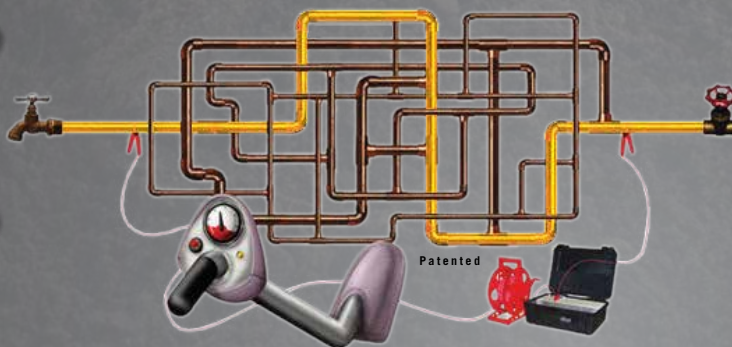
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Anthony Pacilla

Prepping for Flange Work

Looking at the tools you'll should gather for when you have flange work ahead of you

By Anthony Pacilla

Line up the bolt holes, slide the bolts in, tighten them all up and turn it on! It's that easy, right? If flange work were that easy, everyone would be doing it.

I like to think of flange work like the game of golf. If a couple of jobs go your way, you love doing flange work. You hate it if a couple of shots put you in the trees. There are, however, a few things you can do consistently that will make your life easier.

ORGANIZE A FEW TOOLKITS

You don't need a ton of tools to do flange work. There are only two types of tools you need to have. The first type is standard hand tools such as socket sets, breaker bars, wrench sets, etc. Those, for the most part, can be purchased from a hardware store. The other tools you need are either hard to find or very expensive (different types of slings, flange alignment tools, flange splitters, alignment tools, levelers, etc.

Keep one or two toolboxes of the small hand tools you need on almost every flange job. Keep these two toolboxes stocked up and ready to go so you don't have to sort through unrelated tools to find what you need. I suggest buying duplicates of the tools you need in these boxes, even though you might already have a set.

TOOLBOX 1: PREP

As with any flange retrofit job, you first need to remove the existing flange work. Therefore, in our first toolbox, we will keep demo equipment. The first box should include cast-cutting reciprocating saw blades (a lot of them), a mechanical flange splitter, steel wedges, a nut splitter pack for the different nut sizes (see below for common nut sizes) and torch tips (if you are with an outfit which uses cutting torches).

It would help if you also kept cleaning and abrasive equipment in this toolbox because once your flange work

I like to think of flange work like the game of golf. If a couple of jobs go your way, you love doing flange work. You hate it if a couple of shots put you in the trees.

has been removed, you'll need to clean the surfaces of the flanges you are tying back onto. This box would include a grinder with cleaning wheels, gasket scrapers and clean rags.

TOOLBOX 2: WRENCHES

First, you should understand that going to a hardware store and buying a standard and metric socket set usually won't do you any good. The most sold socket sets have a mix of $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch drive (worthless on flange work) and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive sockets up to one inch.

The most common bolt sizes you'll need are $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{7}{8}$, $1\frac{1}{16}$, $1\frac{1}{8}$, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch. I suggest buying these impact socket sizes, a cordless impact drill, charged batteries, a charger, two $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive breaker bars, two sets of wrenches for these sizes, one $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drive torque wrench, and a set of torque limiting extension bars. Keep all this in 1-inch.

You should also keep a few alignment tools in this box, such as flange alignment pins and spud wrenches.

There are two common types of alignment pins: two-hole pin sets and flange alignment pin sets. Two-hole pin sets have two cone-shaped tightening nuts that align the flange holes as you draw them. When done with at least two holes, the flange will align the other holes. Flange alignment pin sets do a better job with less effort. They



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look like flange bolts with half of the threads cut to a taper. You get one or two of these pins in, turn the pin bolt with a quarter turn, and the flange will magically line up.

LARGER TOOLS

I suggest keeping a laminated list of the essential tools you'll typically need. These could consist of a sledgehammer, digging bar, house jack, car jack, pipe clamps, blockchain hoists, ratcheting lever block chain hoists, manual chain hoists, strapping and rigging equipment, wooden timber, temporary pipe supports, rollers, and chain vice to name a few. 

Anthony Pacilla has been in the trades since he was 9 years old (family business). He started cleaning toilets, mopping floors and putting fittings away in the warehouse. As he picked up skills, he would add becoming a ground man and laborer. When he was ready, Pacilla became an apprentice and then a journeyman plumber. He graduated college with a business and economics degree and immediately wanted to come back to work in the family business. A few years ago, Pacilla became a licensed master plumber. To contact Pacilla, email editor@plumbermag.com.



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Product Spotlight

Pressure balance valve designed to make shower installation easier

By Craig Mandli

The pressure balance valve is an integral part of any new shower installation. Installing the valve can sometimes be labor-intensive, though. Fortunately GROHE now provides a simplified pressure balance platform to streamline specifying and installation while providing sought-after showering features and aesthetics — the GrohSafe 3.0 pressure balance valve with integrated diverter and matching two-handle trims.

The latest pressure balance valve system enables builders, designers and plumbers to more easily specify and install GROHE showering solutions with versatility and dependability for the discerning consumer. The valve is designed to make installation easier than ever by eliminating the need to install and align a separate diverter and separate trims, thereby reducing labor costs and saving time during the build-and-install process. The valves feature convertible functionality and utilize the same body for both two- and three-way water applications. This enables effortless control of body sprays, hand showers and showerheads from a single two-handle trim to deliver a luxurious showering experience.

“Our customers look to GROHE for the most innovative, advanced shower solutions, and since the GrohSafe 3.0 pressure balance valve has a built-in diverter, this reduces complexity during a big pain point for our PROs — the



shower installation process,” says Libby Gerberi, senior brand specialist at GROHE. “The improved valve makes it easier to design, build and install multifunction showering systems that deliver authentic spa-like experiences. Additionally, they control up to three water functions in a single trim, enabling a sleek, minimalist shower design to make your GROHE dream shower a reality.”

The compact size and flat back design of the GrohSafe 3.0 Pressure Balance Valve offers extreme versatility and ensures an easy fit in tight spaces and thin walls. It also enables effortless back-to-back installations for multifamily residences or apartments. Featuring GROHE’s double ceramic technology, the one-piece pressure balance cartridge and mixing discs flawlessly deliver an ideal blend of hot and cold water while the pressure balancing spool reacts quickly to changes in water pressure to prevent scalding. This duo, made of high-grade ceramic, resists mineral buildup and harsh water conditions, ensuring safe, leak-free performance and longevity.

The GrohSafe 3.0 is designed to pair with GROHE’s array of all-metal two- and three-way trims. Concealed mounting creates a clean, sophisticated look with no visible screws to obstruct the trim’s polished appearance. The metal wall plate and handle ensure long lasting durability. **800-444-7643; www.grohe.us**



Taco 0026e ECM high-efficiency circulator

Taco Comfort Solutions expanded its family of easy to use, high-efficiency ECM circulators with the addition of the 0026e. With a maximum of 26 feet of head and 44 gpm, the new circulator offers up to 85% energy savings over a conventional circulator. The 0026e circulator is available with cast iron or NSF/ANSI 61- and 372-certified

stainless steel volutes, ideal for either closed-loop heating systems or domestic hot water systems. It also offers a rotatable control box for a professional look, no matter the orientation of the installed circulator. The 0026e circulator features five simple settings: low, medium, high, Taco’s exclusive activeADAPT self-adjusting proportional pressure, and 0-10v control. The 0026e is dual-voltage 115/230 volts, and the 6 1/2-inch rotated flange-to-flange dimension retrofits most circulators in its class. **401-942-8000; www.tacomfort.com**

Webstone boiler vent valve

Webstone, a brand of NIBCO, announces its new boiler vent valve. The space-saving valve expands the utility of a boiler's existing 3/4-inch pressure relief valve port, using its location at the top of the unit for the placement of an air vent and other accessories. Its automatic air vent can be isolated for service, allowing the PRV (included with the boiler or sold separately) to operate unobstructed. Plugged FIP ports accommodate the installation of a low-water cut-off device and/or pressure gauge. **800-255-9529; www.webstonevalves.com**



RIDGID SeeSnake Mini Pro inspection camera

RIDGID, a part of Emerson's professional tools portfolio, introduces the SeeSnake Mini Pro inspection camera with TruSense technology. The small, yet rugged Mini Pro is designed to inspect up to 200 feet of 1 1/2- to 8-inch pipe with its mid-flex push cable that can navigate hard 90-degree bends. Its innovative 25 mm digital self-leveling camera always keeps the in-pipe image upright and is shorter than the traditional 25 mm camera head. **800-474-3443; www.ridgid.com**




REHAU polymer multiport tees for EVERLOC+ system

REHAU expanded its EVERLOC+ compression-sleeve fitting system with nine new polymer multiport tee options. The additional tees include closed-end, flow-through and opposing port configurations. The increased range of 22 polymer multi-port tees provides more tailored options and extends the benefits of EVERLOC+ further into multifamily and other light commercial plumbing projects. The tees are designed for use with RAUPEX PEXa pipe and EVERLOC+ PEXa compression sleeves. Each connection contains multiple sealing edges to provide enhanced security, while the textured interior of the PEXa compression sleeve offers an extreme grip and immediate seal. Connections are made quickly using a consistent, two-step expansion and compression process with battery-powered EVERLOC+ compression-sleeve tools. Completed EVERLOC+ connections are immediately secure and ready for pressure testing, streamlining installations while reinforcing system reliability. **800-247-9445; www.municipex.com**



PRIER narrow wall hydrants

The PRIER P-623 and P-628 narrow wall hydrants offer a variety of installation options, come with a lockable stainless steel box, and have integral shut-offs for simple future maintenance. The P-623 is a single temperature valve while the P-628 features both hot and cold inlets. With a 3 1/8-inch depth, the hydrants are designed to fit inside a standard 4-inch wall and install flush with the outside wall. The wall hydrants are built for interior walls and non-freezing climate applications, and are suitable for healthcare facilities, schools, stadiums and other large recreational areas. **800-362-9055; www.prier.com** 



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Atlanta Build Expo, Cobb Galleria Centre - Halls C & D, Atlanta. Visit www.buildexpousa.com

Sept. 24-28

International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials 94th Annual Education and Business Conference, Hyatt San Antonio, San Antonio. Visit www.iapmo.org/ibu/events

Sept. 28 - Oct. 1

American Society of Plumbing Engineers Tech Symposium, Maydenbauer Center, Bellevue, Washington. Visit www.aspe.org/conventions-symposiums/

Oct. 3-6

Service World Expo, Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix. Visit www.serviceworldexpo.com

Oct. 3-5

WaterSmart Innovations, South Point Hotel and Conference Center, Las Vegas. Visit www.awwa.org/events-education/water-smart-innovations

Oct. 17-20

World Plumbing Council, Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Center of International Sourcing, Shanghai. Visit www.worldplumbing.org

Oct. 22-25

Mechanical Service Contractors of America Annual Education Conference, JW Marriott, Marco Island, Florida. Visit www.mcaa.org/events/calendar/msca-2023-annual-educational-conference/

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PHCC Connect 2023, Huntington Convention Center, Cleveland. Visit www.phccweb.org/connect

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A.O. Smith honored with fifth Energy Star Award

A.O. Smith was honored with a 2023 Energy Star Partner of the Year Sustained Excellence award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. This is the company's fifth consecutive Energy Star Partner of the Year award, and its third time being honored as a Sustained Excellence partner. The award distinguishes companies that have made a long-term commitment to energy management through its products or services. A.O. Smith is one of only a select number of organizations to be recognized as a Sustained Excellence partner.

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Uponor's John Sillerud tapped to lead supply chain management



Uponor North America announced that Jon Sillerud, vice president, operations, has agreed to accept the additional responsibilities of leading the supply chain function for the company. He has been filling the role on an interim basis for several months. His new title is vice president, integrated supply chain, Uponor North America. In his newly expanded role, he will guide the supply chain strategy and team, building partnerships with suppliers and leading continuous improvement initiatives that cover supply planning, production scheduling, distribution, transportation and inventory.

Franklin Electric announces 2022 recipients for outstanding achievement

At its annual Commercial Summit, Franklin Electric announced the winners of this year's awards for outstanding performance, sales and customer support. Recognized were U.S./Canada Salesperson of the Year Aaron Jackson; U.S./Canada Field Service Engineer of the Year Walter Leake; U.S./Canada Team of the Year Fleet (part of the industrial and engineered systems business unit); Latin America Sales Leader of the Year Luis Caso; and Latin America Team of the Year, Argentina. **PI**

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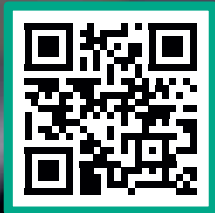


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