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+ Technician of the Year Awards
+ Bed Bug Supplement
+ Pests in Paris

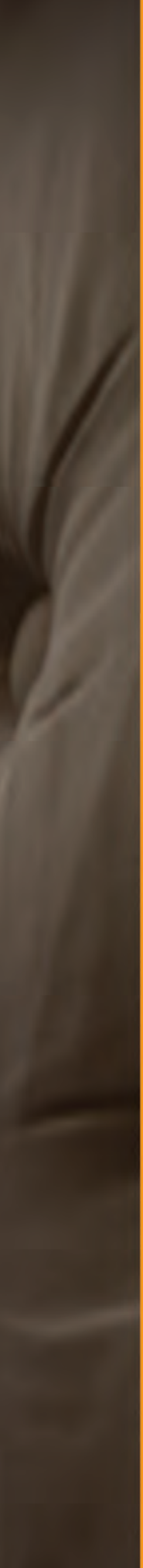
CULTURE PLAYBOOK



Building a winning team takes talent. But to get the most out of your squad, company culture can be the not-so-secret weapon. **Turn to page 32** to see how you can focus on people and come out on top.




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PCT PEST CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

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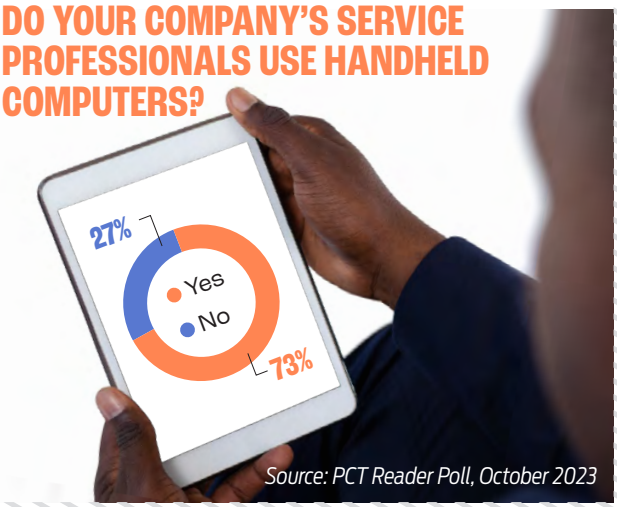
PCT's The Pulse: Digging Deeper features weekly online polls on topics PCOs are talking about now.

If you would like to have your voice heard, contact us www.pctonline.com/contact. Participate in our latest poll at www.pctonline.com/polls.

READER POLL RESULTS

Here's a look at results from a recent PCT Reader Poll.

DO YOUR COMPANY'S SERVICE PROFESSIONALS USE HANDHELD COMPUTERS?

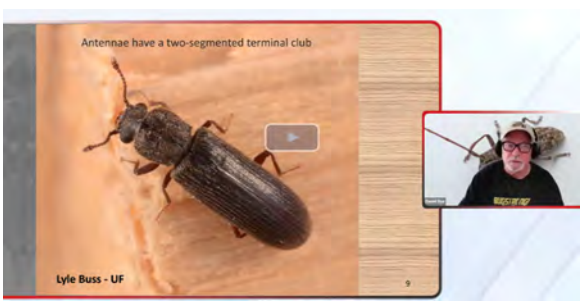


Source: PCT Reader Poll, October 2023

ON-DEMAND WEBINAR:

Meet The Beetles

The PCT website is home to dozens of on-demand webinars and virtual events. In a recent webinar sponsored by Nisus Corporation, industry veteran Daniel Dye and Nisus' Harry Bryan reviewed commonly encountered wood-boring beetles and remediation strategies. Watch the webinar now at bit.ly/478gdJT.



VIDEO:

Crown Leadership Awards Ceremony

PCT and Syngenta recognized the Crown Leadership Award Class of 2023 at NPMA PestWorld in Hawaii, including Justin McCauley (pictured), Eve Pappas, Ted Brayton, Changlu Wang and Jim Fredericks. Also recognized posthumously was Bob Rosenberg, our "Lifetime Achievement Award" winner. PCT captured video of these presentations, including each winner's acceptance speech. Watch them all at bit.ly/49xmfFs.



NPMA PestWorld Coverage

PCT staffers hit the road in October, heading to Hawaii, location of this year's NPMA PestWorld. Head to bit.ly/3ufWKs9 to read and see all of our coverage, from feature stories based on sessions to video interviews with leading pest management professionals, including ABC Home & Commercial Services' Randy McCarty (pictured below) and more.



ONLINE EXTRA

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Culture Shock

I know this month's cover and cover story ("Culture Playbook," page 32) reference football, so pardon me for mixing sports examples, but building great culture makes me think of the NBA's Miami Heat. Earlier this year, the Heat unveiled a special version of its in-game jersey that read "Heat Culture" on the front. The design was derided as lazy or trite by some fans and would-be fashion critics, but I think it's a fiery example of touting what makes them great.

In NBA circles, the team's culture, fostered by former head coach and current president Pat Riley, has produced *pretty good* results. Since 2006, the team has won three championships and made seven NBA Finals, all while cycling through dozens of different players across 17 years.

I haven't been in a professional sports team's locker room to see the culture at work, but I have had the chance to see it in the pest management industry at conferences and by visiting some PCOs. One of those visits includes heading to Atlanta earlier this year for Arrow Exterminators' Annual Fiscal Year Kickoff, where I saw and heard more than 500 employees, from technicians and branch managers to corporate leaders, all of whom seemed to really be into the culture the company has built.

Everyone I spoke with wanted to talk about how much they loved working there. I could be cynical and say it's because they saw the PCT logo on my polo shirt and wanted to paint their company in a good light, but it didn't *feel* like that.

And that's the thing about good company culture: You know it when you see it, but you can't easily pinpoint the *why* or *how*.

"Culture is tough because it's not tangible," King Jones III, owner of CT Pest Solutions, Naugatuck, Conn., said in our cover story.

Complicating the matter even more: Your company's got culture, but whether or not it's good might be up to your leaders setting the tone. For some great examples, check out the story for insights and best practices from your peers on how they focus on building good company culture and how that starts at the top.

This month's issue also features our annual Technician of the Year awards on page 45, where we recognize a trio of service professionals who make daily differences in the lives of their customers and co-workers.

Residential Technician of the Year, Matt Hall, has transferred many of his EMS skills to become a standout service professional at Rottler Pest Solutions, Chesterfield, Mo. Much like an EMS worker, Hall investigates, asks questions and gets to the source of a problem. He prides himself on seeking out structural issues, landscaping and other factors to find non-pesticide solutions whenever possible. Hall also does his best to learn his customers' patterns and schedule service times that work best for them.

Marvin Dalton, our Termite Technician of the Year, has become a leader at Accel Pest & Termite Control, Virginia Beach, Va., since joining the company in 2017. A former mason, Dalton's construction knowledge and people skills have made him a standout termite technician. As a termite technician in the Virginia Beach market, Dalton also does crawlspace work, and installs vapor barriers, custom crawl doors and vents, in addition to his termite work.

A technician with "the perfect personality and temperament for dealing with commercial customers" is how co-workers describe Tom Kuligoski, Rose Pest Solutions, Saginaw, Mich., our Commercial Technician of the Year. His ability to build and nurture relationships has helped him gain client cooperation and partnership. Kuligoski services large, audited accounts, where his consistent service and meticulous record-keeping have been crucial to his and Rose Pest Solutions' success.

I don't think it's a stretch to imagine that all three of them, along with our Technician of the Year finalists, come from companies that have built a great culture. Winning takes talent, whether that's shooting the basketball or properly identifying pest issues. But great company culture, and everything that comes with it, such as employee retention and satisfaction, can be what takes you from one pretty good season to a dynasty. **PCT**

The author is managing editor of PCT.

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Bed Bug Service Requests Up 60 Percent in Paris for Rentokil

PARIS — "Paris is Crawling with Bed Bugs;" "Bed Bugs in Paris: Here's What We Know So Far;" "Bed Bug Infestations Sweep Paris." Print and digital media, as well as social media influencers, are having a field day reporting on recent bed bug outbreaks in The City of Lights. But is the bed bug problem really worsening in Paris?

Clara Quinque, marketing manager, Rentokil, Paris, told PCT that — similar to the U.S. — Paris has been dealing with growing bed bug populations the last 15 to 20 years, a result of a variety of factors, including bed bugs becoming resistant to pesticides, but "this most [recent] boom is not representative of the growth we've seen the last 15 to 20 years."

Quinque said Rentokil has seen a 60 percent increase in requests for bed bug services compared to last year, and that 2022 experienced greater demands than 2021.



This upward trend is related to post-COVID 19 human behavior, including increased international travel. Quinque said bed bugs have become more aggressive post-COVID. For example, Quinque said before COVID, a bed bug may have eaten once every three days, while today bed bugs are eating (bloodmeals) every day. "This has led to an increase in [service] demands due to the fact that they are being seen more by the customer," Quinque said.

While Quinque believes the rise in bed bug problems is legitimate, she acknowledged that media coverage has played a role because "it's something everyone can relate to. When people hear about bed bugs in a hotel, or bed bugs in a movie theater, they think 'That could be my family, or that could be my friends.'"

Quinque said the Paris government has been slow to raise awareness, but that may be changing as a result of this recent media coverage. Although the government has not taken any official immediate action that Quinque is aware of, she said "different political parties are coming up with ideas," including reimbursing residents for a certain amount of costs associated with bed bug work.

Also similar to U.S. companies, Rentokil Paris offers a variety of bed bug treatment options, including chemical and heat. Quinque said Rentokil estimates that 80 percent of the treatments performed by its teams are thermal (including heat cannons and 'dry' steam treatments), while the other 20 percent are chemical treatments.

One of the reasons for the interest in bed bugs in Paris is because the city is set to host the 2024 summer Olympics, which will certainly increase international tourism. Quinque said Rentokil has reached out to the Olympic Board of Directors with hopes of providing guidance on best pest control practices. "Not just for bed bugs, but vectors of disease, such as mosquitoes, rodents and flies as well," Quinque said. "It's more a package that we're trying to offer with several Rentokil brands Rentokil has, including Rentokil-Initial, for sanitary and hygiene [considerations]." — *Brad Harbison*

NPMA Reflects on 90 Years at PestWorld 2023 in Hawaii

HONOLULU — As part of the National Pest Management Association's 90th anniversary, the association chose Honolulu for this year's PestWorld, NPMA's annual convention and exposition.

NPMA CEO Dominique Stumpf kicked off the October event by reflecting on 90 years. One fun connection she shared is that at least one member of the Dold family (Rose Pest Solutions, Chicago) has attended every NPMA PestWorld, dating back to the first convention.

Prior to providing an association update, Stumpf took a moment to reflect on the tragic Maui August wildfires.



NPMA's Dominique Stumpf reflected on NPMA's 90th anniversary before turning the podium over to emcee Blake Kia and fire-knife dancers.

Stumpf then discussed future NPMA plans, including what the association is doing to evolve and grow. NPMA recently launched the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) steering committee, which will work to ensure that, from the highest level, NPMA is helping to shape an industry Stumpf said "is more representative of the communities we serve every day." Stumpf said the Diversity Council is "evolving to meet the needs of the members, and with their new direction, is now called Communities Plus, focused on expanding the reach and connecting all communities within the pest control industry." NPMA is introducing four new communities: LGBTQ+; Black and indigenous; Latino; and Total Wellness.

Stumpf provided a number of other NPMA updates before turning the podium over to Brittany Bailey of Envu, which sponsored the opening general session. Blaine Kia emceed the opening session, providing a traditional Hawaiian blessing and sharing the story of Oahu. The session closed with a traditional fire-knife dance. Visit bit.ly/3unHxoQ for all of PCT's coverage of PestWorld '23. — *Brad Harbison*

In Memoriam: Charles 'Charlie' Frommer

ROSLYN, N.Y. — The pest control industry mourns the loss of Charles "Charlie" Frommer, who passed away on Oct. 28 at 88.

Charlie and wife Lori owned and operated Great Neck, N.Y.-based Evins Pest Control, which they bought from Dave and Jackie Ferguson in 1992, and sold to Rollins in 2012.

Prior to moving to the service side of the industry, Frommer had a distinguished career with the state of New York and lat-

EIFEL TOWER: ISTOCK | MLENNY; PESTWORLD: BRAD HARBISON;

er with manufacturer Velsicol Chemical Corporation. In October 1971, Frommer was appointed by the commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to be director of the Bureau of Pest Control, becoming New York's first pest control official. He served in that position until February 1980, when he was recruited by Velsicol.


Charles Frommer

At Velsicol, Frommer served as vice president of regulatory and government affairs. In 1987, Frommer and four other members of Velsicol's management team purchased Velsicol in an employee buy-out. At that time Velsicol had 500 employees and was one of the most highly visible and financially successful chemical manufacturers in the pest control industry.

Frommer was one of the pest control industry's staunchest defenders and an early proponent of NPMA Legislative Day. One of his greatest contributions was in 1986 when he appeared on 60 Minutes to be interviewed by aggressive, confrontational investigative reporter Mike Wallace. Frommer was tasked with explaining the pest control industry's position on chlordane, which at the time was under regulatory review because of human health concerns.

As recounted in his 1997 PCT Leadership profile, Frommer spent hours preparing for the interview with a consultant, and Velsicol was open with 60 Minutes in providing access to information and resources.

FROMMER: PCT FILE PHOTO; ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF COMPANIES

M&A **News**

Please send press releases about your firm to bharbison@gie.net.

Whitmore Pest & Wildlife Control, Denver, Colo., announced its recent acquisition of Ace Pest Control, a firm located in Denver, Colo.


Leadership from the Whitmore and Ace Pest Control teams.

Richard Christner, co-owner of Whitmore Pest & Wildlife Control, said, "We are delighted to welcome the talented team from Ace Pest Control and their loyal customers to the Whitmore Pest Control family. Our goal has always been to offer top-notch pest control solutions while prioritizing customer satisfaction and employee well-being."

Albert Rael, owner of Ace Pest Control, said, "Ace Pest Control has always been a family business and that's a legacy I wanted to see continue. It was crucial for us to find a company that not only aligned with our dedication to exceptional customer service, but also shares our values when it comes to taking excellent care of employees."

Thompson Street Capital Partners (TSCP), a private equity firm based in St. Louis, announced the acquisition of the assets of **Live Oak Pest Control** and **PestBan+** by **PestCo Holdings.**

Located in San Antonio, Texas, Live Oak is a provider of residential and commercial pest control services. PestBan+, located in Dallas, is a provider of commercial pest control services with a focus on multi-family communities.

These are the 12th and 13th investments for PestCo.

Sureguard Termite & Pest Services, located in Dallas, announced the merger and acquisition of **NTX Best Pest** of Frisco, Texas, a family-owned company serving the north Texas area.



Casey Slingerland (left) and Mike Houston (right).

"We are excited to be able to service the NTX customers and provide them with the personalized services that they are accustomed to," said Mike Houston, president of Sureguard Termite & Pest Services. "We also provide additional services that were not previously available by NTX."

Houston described NTX as one of the top PCO companies on the far north side of the Dallas market. He said the NTX acquisition allows Sureguard to create more density in its routing, which will allow the company to better service its clients.

NTX Owner Casey Slingerland, who was referred to Houston by a mutual industry friend, said he was happy to find a family-owned company to transition all NTX's customers.

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"In fact, several months after the show aired, Mike Wallace said Velsicol had been one of the five most cooperative companies he had ever interviewed," he recalled.

This transparency, combined with Frommer's on-air appearance, calmed a rising tide of fear about how the pest control industry would be portrayed. One year later, in 1987, Frommer was instrumental in helping the pest control industry negotiate to have chlordane phased out rather than banned.

In 1992, Frommer and wife Lori, a former pesticide regulatory official in California, were seeking a new challenge, so they sought out pest control company ownership. After reviewing more than 60 pest control firms from throughout the U.S., they decided to purchase Evins Pest Control, whose history dated back to 1936, when it was founded by Phil Mayer, an early mentor of Frommer.

Under the leadership of Frommer and his wife, Evins grew to become a leading NYC area pest control company, primarily servicing commercial accounts. Frommer continued his involvement in legislation and regulatory issues and remained an active member of pest control associations at the state and national levels.

PCO News

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Burt's Termite & Pest Control, Columbus, Ind., celebrated National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in pink fashion.

Service technicians wore pink booties and buttons to raise awareness for breast cancer and honor those who have been affected by this disease.

Burt's partnered with Shubee shoe covers and local business, Buns and Beards Beauty Lounge, to support their annual Bask to Beat Cancer event. A portion of sales in October were donated to assist with out-of-pocket expenses not covered by insurance that cancer patients may experience while receiving treatment.

This is the third consecutive year Burt's has participated in "Covered for the Cause" and Burt's said the team looks forward to continuing this tradition.



Service technicians from Burt's Termite & Pest Control wore pink booties and buttons to raise awareness for breast cancer and honor those who have been affected by this disease.

Pest-X Exterminating, a pest control company serving the Piedmont Triad (N.C.), announced the launch of its annual Pest-X Community Champion Award. This initiative is aimed at recognizing and celebrating the dedicated individuals who make a positive impact in the company's local communities.

The Pest-X Community Champion Award seeks to shine a spotlight on first responders, teachers or anyone who has gone above and beyond to contribute to the betterment of the community. The selected Community Champion will receive $500 and one year of complimentary pest control services, ensuring their homes remain safe and pest-free, the company said.

"The Pest-X Community Champion Award is our way of giving back to the communities we serve and recognizing those who selflessly serve others. We understand the importance of a strong, supportive community and the individuals who make it all possible," said Meredith Shaw Miller, business manager at Pest-X Exterminating. "By offering a year of free pest control services, we aim to ease one aspect of their lives so they can continue their remarkable work."

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There will be a celebration of his life next summer at Soft Maple, Frommer's former hunting camp and home since 2019, located in Croghan, N.Y. — *Brad Harbison*

New Stored Product Protection Center for Insects Limited

WESTFIELD, Ind. — Insects Limited announced the grand opening of its brand-new headquarters, named The Center for Stored Protection.



The Center for Stored Product Protection, located in Westfield, Ind.

The center, located in Westfield, Ind., is a hub for research, development and industry advancement, the company said. It was designed to foster innovation and collaboration in the field of stored product protection, and includes educational spaces, a warehouse and a laboratory for the development and testing of products that safeguard stored commodities from pests.

The company said the research lab within the center will be home to experts committed to pushing the boundaries of stored product protection through pioneering research and development. Insects Limited said the facilities within the center will enable testing and quality assurance processes for its product line.

"Our new headquarters, The Center for Stored Product Protection, signifies the culmination of our tireless dedication to our mission," said Insects Limited Vice President Tom Mueller. "We are excited to share this journey with our valued customers, partners and the entire stored product protection community. The Center for Stored Product Protection is a testament to our commitment to the future of our industry."

/// **continued on page 23**

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2023 State of the RODENT CONTROL MARKET

INSIDE:

- The Rat Race Rages On
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Steve Levy

The last few years have presented the industry with a number of new and unexpected challenges. These challenges have taught us that it is important to have the organizational ability to both adapt and to be nimble.

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- Now, more than ever, working collaboratively with national and state organizations to assist in safeguarding and protecting industry rights.
- Providing a large variety of bait forms, such as pellets, meal, and liquid baits, to complement our widely used blox and soft bait formulations.
- Developing a full line of smart rodent sensing devices, which PMPs across the United States and the entire world have been using to save time and effort at their account's facilities.

Partnership with Solutions

Although no one can be quite certain what the future holds, to ensure success, it is critical to be surrounded by partners who have a thorough understanding of your business and can provide access to the best resources available. Whether through embracing new technology, navigating changing regulatory environments, or reducing labor costs through enhanced efficiency, we are here to help you.

Please get in touch with your Bell technical representatives so that they can go over the full range of solutions available and discuss how these tools can benefit your company. We wish you success in 2024, and we sincerely appreciate your support and business.

Steve Levy

President and CEO
Bell Laboratories



THE RAT RACE RAGES ON

If your pest management company is among the 94 percent that offer rodent control services, your service team isn't likely to be bored anytime soon.

Rodent activity continued to climb in 2023, with no signs of slowing down, according to the 2023 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey, sponsored by Bell Laboratories. Sixty percent of PMPs reported increases in rodent infestations over the past year, with another 38 percent saying infestations held steady.

Across the country, mice and rats were far and away the most commonly encountered rodent species, collectively representing 96 percent of all rodent service calls. House mice represented 44 percent of calls and other mice 4 percent, while roof rats represented 31 percent, Norway rats 15 percent and pack rats 2 percent.

Rats and mice are truly on a tear in the Northeast, where 70 percent of PMPs reported increasing numbers.

"We started seeing an uptick in rodents 10 or 12 years ago," said Ted Brayton of Griggs & Browne, which services accounts in southeastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. "We had a mild winter that year, and it was the first time calls kept coming right through the winter. Since then, we've been getting rodent calls year-round."

Other notable changes Brayton has witnessed since starting out in the business three decades ago are that rats, which had historically been an inner-city issue for his market, spread to the suburbs five or six years ago, and that calls for mice started outnumbering calls for ants four years ago. "That has been the case for three of the past four years," he said.

Rodent momentum is strong in the West as well: 65 percent of PMPs there reported rising rodent infestations. Greg Bausch said rodent calls (primarily for roof rats and house mice) are up 45 percent year-over-year at American City Pest & Termite in Gardena, Calif.

"I attribute this to a lot of different factors, including the really wet winter we had and the passage of AB 1788 by the California legislature, which pretty much eliminated the use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) here in the Los Angeles market."

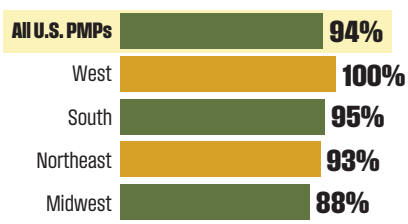
In the South, Shaun Graves of Havard Pest Control (Hattiesburg, Miss.) said that pressure is holding steady in his market.

"Rodents are just part of our everyday life. Mostly we see field mice and house mice on the residential side, with an occasional Norway or roof rat infestation. We also encounter a lot of rodent pressure in commercial locations that are situated near woodlines or in fields," he said, adding that those accounts can be as diverse as grain storage buildings, car dealerships and gas stations.

Though rodents continue to drive more business in fall and winter nationwide, as reported by a combined 59 percent of PMPs, 28 percent said their markets experience no seasonal difference. The Midwest is an exception, experiencing much more rodent business in fall and winter (a combined 78 percent), with only 14 percent indicating no seasonal difference.

PMPs SAY YES TO RODENT CONTROL

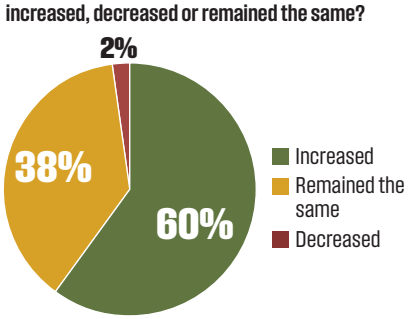
Respondents who said yes, their company location offers rodent control services:



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 243

INFESTATION LEVELS ON THE RISE

Over the past year, have the number of rodent infestations in your location's market area increased, decreased or remained the same?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

BUSY SEASONS

	All U.S. PMPs	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Fall	31%	30%	59%	27%	22%
Winter	28%	22%	19%	33%	27%
Summer	10%	11%	5%	9%	16%
Spring	3%	0%	3%	6%	2%
No seasonal difference	28%	38%	14%	26%	33%

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229



8.6%
AVERAGE TYPICAL CALLBACK RATE FOR RODENT CONTROL JOBS IN THE U.S.

BUILDING A BETTER TREATMENT PROTOCOL

Baits, traps and exclusion are essential tools for rodent control. How PMPs apply these and other control measures varies based on the type of rodent, level of infestation, customer preferences, technician preferences and other considerations. But no matter how you go about tackling the issue at hand, every rodent job begins the same way: with a thorough interior and exterior inspection.

"When you inspect a site, whether it's commercial or residential, you have to look not only at structural issues but also the surrounding environment," said Todd Barber, Barber's Best Termite and Pest, Tallahassee, Fla.

"In southeast Florida, for example, the land can be swampy, so we look at the entire site around the property. If it's in a residential neighborhood, we're looking for a park, a body of water, drainage canals or a woodline close to the property. Any of those conditions can contribute to the overall rodent population in the area. Conducting that thorough site inspection in addition to your structural inspection helps you determine what game plan, what course of action, to use for rodent control," he said.

Like many PMPs, Barber has found that structural modifications, exclusion and monitoring can go a long way in helping with long-term rodent control. For shorter-term rodent management, he uses everything from mechanical and glue traps to liquid, solid and fine-crushed meal baits, depending on the scenario.

"Rats get trap- and bait-shy, so product rotation is critical," he said.

Judging from the small number of PMPs who reported experiencing rodenticide resistance — just 21 percent — and the broad variety of products they said they use (see accompanying chart), product rotation is a widely accepted practice.

"The key to successful rodent control is recognizing that there's not a standard one-size-fits-all protocol," Barber concluded.

"Each situation is different, each structure is different; it comes with its own nuances as to what you'll need to do to gain control. There are protocols you put into place at a bare minimum, but to really solve the problem and keep the rodents away, you need to determine on a case-by-case basis what's going to be best for that site."



THE POWER OF CLEAN

Early in Andrea Brubaker's pest management career, she recognized the need for sanitation in controlling rodents and other pests by eliminating conditions that attract and sustain rodent populations. If you have restaurant clients, Brubaker's experiences in servicing accounts may feel familiar:

"We'd go to a site, do our service, check out the common areas and exterior, and then notate sanitation deficiencies: overflowing trash containers, grease spilling on the ground, wide-open doors," she said. "We'd write all that in the sanitation section of our service report and talk it over with the client. We'd come back the next week or month and see that the door was still open, the grease was worse and the trash was still overflowing."

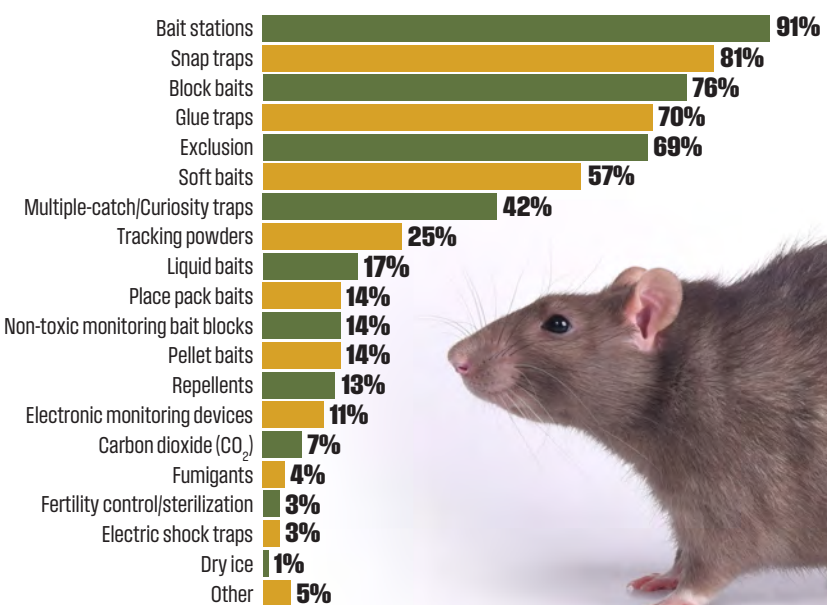
Brubaker decided to take a different tack in the battle against rodent infestations. She and her husband established District Enviro Services, a hot water pressure-washing and steam-cleaning company serving commercial facilities in the Washington, D.C., Metro region.

"Every property with trash needs to clean its exterior – the containers, the areas where the containers are placed, and the surrounding areas. You need to remove the food odors and break up the pheromone trails that attract rodents," she explained.

"Whether you are able to engage the client in cleaning properly or hire a professional company to do it, sanitation is a critical element of any rodent management program."

LOTS OF CONTROL OPTIONS

Which types of products/services does your location use to control rodents?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229; Respondents could select multiple answers

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The 2023 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey was sponsored by Bell Laboratories and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 4,349 pest control company owners, operators, technical directors and managers was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 243 respondents – a 6 percent response rate – via online survey from Aug. 9-23, 2023. Respondents who did not offer rodent control services were eliminated. The margin of error for percentages based on the remaining 229 respondents is 6.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

RODENTICIDE USAGE AND CONCERNS

Here's what your peers said about their use of rodenticides:

66%

of PMPs are concerned about impending EPA label changes for rodenticides.

36%

have either modified or are planning to modify their rodent management program due to these upcoming changes.

16%

are less dependent on rodenticides than five years ago; 22 percent are more dependent; 55 percent are holding steady with rodenticide use.

33%

have increased their use of non-toxic rodent control products/services in the past 12 months.

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

PACKAGING YOUR PROGRAM FOR PROFITABILITY

As the demand for rodent services continues to rise, it's important to evaluate your business model to ensure you're providing these services as profitably as possible. How that plays out from one company to the next can be very different, depending on the type of accounts and infestations encountered.

For example, Logan Bourque's team at Beyond Pest Services in New Bedford, Mass., does a *lot* of rodent control work, with a solid 40 percent of overall revenues attributable to these services. The company's primarily commercial clients typically come to Beyond Pest Services when their current program isn't getting the job done. Almost without exception, Bourque finds a lack of appropriate exclusion. That's why he automatically includes exclusion services in his contracts.

"When I take over a rodent account, I review their current IPM plan and tell the customer frankly, 'Look, you're having a problem because of XYZ. Here's how they're getting in, and here's what we need to do,'" Bourque said. "I provide them with an all-inclusive price, making sure they understand how important the exclusion is. I know in my heart of hearts that's going to solve the problem best, so we get that work done, then deploy interior trapping or exterior baiting, depending on the pressure."

To Bundle or Not to Bundle? Another factor that weighs into profitability is how rodent services are packaged: as part of, or separate from, recurring service programs.

Most PMPs (61 percent) reported they were flexible, including rodent in some of their general pest service contracts but marketing it as a standalone service in others. How they make that determination differs.

For example, Greg Bausch, American City Pest & Termite, considers the type of service. "If a customer is on a recurring service, we include interior rodent trapping, but exterior baiting programs are an add-on service," he explained.

Bourque, on the other hand, considers the type of client. "Commercial accounts don't get an option. They need to have rodents, roaches, flies and other pests controlled, so they automatically get the full program. Residentially, we'll sometimes do a rodent package without general pest," he said.

Shaun Graves, Havard Pest, does bundle rodent services as part of broader pest programs, but advises caution. "If rodent control is bundled into a program and then a big infestation develops, you may have to spend additional time at no additional cost. We train our technicians to do good inspections up front. Then we can anticipate the level of service that will be required and build that into the contract."

The time-intensive nature of rodent work is something that should always be taken into account, Ted Brayton, Griggs & Browne, added. "The huge influx of rodent calls we've had over the past several years puts more pressure on our technicians and our pricing.

"Where an ant or a bee call might require a single visit, a mouse call is likely three or four, and each visit is much more time-consuming. You can raise the price somewhat to cover the additional labor and material costs, but at some point, that price may become prohibitive to the homeowner," Brayton explained.



CASHING IN ON THE BUSINESS POTENTIAL

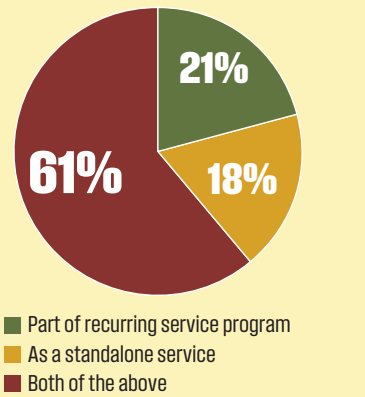
As evidence of a multi-year trend whose momentum seems to have no bounds, 59 percent of PMPs nationwide and 73 percent in the Northeast said that rodent work is more significant to their businesses this year than it was five years ago (a mere 1 percent said it is less significant).

The majority expect to see this growth reflected in 2023 revenues: Overall, 61 percent (70 percent in the Northeast) look for a year-over-year increase in the percentage of revenue attributable to rodent work. Only 3 percent expect to see a decline in that percentage.



STAND-ALONE OR INCLUDED?

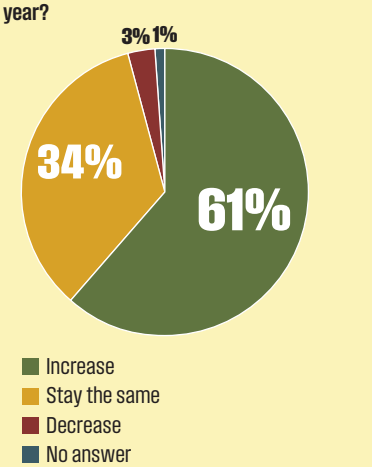
Is rodent control a stand-alone paid service or included as part of your recurring service program?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

MORE $ IN 2023

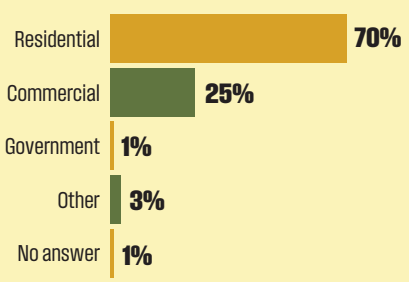
Compared with last year, how do you expect the percentage of revenue generated from your location's rodent control services to change this year?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

WHO BUYS RODENT CONTROL?

What rodent control market generates the most income for your location?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

RODENT SERVICES COMMAND A HIGHER PRICE

The median or typical price that pest management companies were charging in 2023 for a residential rodent control job was $247, with Midwestern companies on the low side ($175) and Western companies on the high side ($350). This represents a nearly 18 percent increase over 2022, when the median price was $210.

The median is the value that lies at the middle of a distribution, so 50 percent of values are above it and 50 percent are below. It represents the "typical" response and is not influenced by extreme values compared to a mean (or average).

OF GREATER IMPORTANCE

In the past five years, has rodent control become a more or less significant portion of your location's business?

	All U.S. PMPs	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
More significant	59%	73%	54%	55%	59%
Same	34%	22%	38%	38%	29%
Less significant	1%	0%	3%	0%	2%
Can't compare; not involved 5 years ago	7%	5%	5%	7%	10%

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

CHA-CHING!

What percentage of your location's overall service revenue in the last calendar year was generated by rodent control services?

	All U.S. PMPs	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
50% or more	12%	27%	6%	8%	12%
30-49%	27%	43%	27%	22%	24%
10-29%	40%	22%	49%	43%	44%
Less than 10%	19%	8%	17%	26%	20%

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 229

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/// continued from page 14

Joe and Mary Wilson Fulfill Virginia Tech Endowed Professorship Pledge

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. — Joe and Mary Wilson announced they have fulfilled their pledge to establish the Joseph R. and Mary W. Wilson Endowed Urban Entomology Professorship in the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Wilson is the former owner of PermaTreat Pest Control, a pest control firm located in central and northern Virginia.

The Wilson Urban Entomology Professor will lead entomology research efforts with the goal of discovering new and innovative ways to fight the scourge of urban pests such as bed bugs and cockroaches and share that information with the public.

In 2018, the couple had pledged to establish the professorship.

Comings & Goings

If your company has added new personnel, send a photo and press release to bharbison@gie.net.


Bell


Holly


Veronick


Mullen


Gallion


Olschewski

Envu announced that **Jackie Bell** was promoted to key account manager for the West. Envu also announced that **Michael Holly** was hired as a sales manager for the Southwest, **Eric Veronick** as area sales manager for California and **Shawn Mullen** as key account manager for the Envu Mosquito Management business.

Michael Gallion, former business development director, Bird Barrier, now serves as vice president of business development and sales for the manufacturer. **Ray Olschewski,** former eastern technical specialist, is now technical service manager, Bird Barrier, overseeing a larger U.S. territory.


Sharp


Nase

Cetane Associates announced that **Griffin Sharp** has joined its financial advisory firm as director. Sharp has more than 13 years of experience in valuation, contract analysis, negotiation and acquisitions.

Skyhawk announced the appointment of **James "Jim" Nase** as its ambassador to the pest control and wildlife control industries. Nase has 45 years of experience working in pest and wildlife control.



Pass Pest Control Acquires T&G Pest Control

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Pass Pest Control, Evansville, Ind., announced the acquisition of T&G Pest Control, Evansville, Ind.

T&G was led by owner Ryan Fleming, who previously worked alongside Pass Pest Control President and CEO Keith Smith as a sales representative at Terminix, and later as region sales manager with Action Pest Control.

Similar to Pass Pest Control, T&G is primarily a residential (85 percent) service provider. T&G differs from Pass Pest in that it offers wildlife control and real estate inspections; Smith said Pass Pest Control will continue to offer these services.

Fleming will stay on with Pass Pest Control as vice president of sales.

"Pass Pest is excited to bring Ryan and his team on board with us," Smith said. "It really feels like we are getting the band back together. [Pass Pest Control owner] Kevin Pass and I have worked with Ryan for many years. He is a very skilled growth leader and we look forward to him managing our sales performance going forward." — *Brad Harbison*

Drones Slowly but Steadily Finding a Place in Pest Control Businesses

CLEVELAND — Drones are more than a fun toy to break out at the beach or barbecue. Some pest management professionals have found them to be useful tools, particularly when it comes to inspecting difficult-to-access areas like rooftops.

Results from PCT's most recent reader poll showed that 21 percent use drones, while another 79 percent do not.

Bill Kirchner, president of Cleveland Chemical Pest Control, said his company used them in the past (before commercial certification requirements). "We used them to view areas where a ladder or a lift was necessary to inspect it (e.g., looking at the top of a chimney for a cap)."



Buck Hempel, owner of Wingman Pest Control, Lyon, Mich., uses smaller drones that are under the size needed for an FAA license. "We use them to inspect high or steep or dangerous parts of buildings for animal entry points," he said.

Hempel said drones have proven extremely useful. "We use them often to keep our people safe, especially if inspecting a structure alone," he said.

Another PCO who benefits from using drones is Billy Tesh, president of Pest Management Systems (PMi), Greensboro, N.C., who said drones have reduced inspection costs. — *Brad Harbison* **PCT**

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Tropicare Termite and Pest Control



"We really feel great about our choice to merge with the Arrow family. Their team impressed us. We know we made the right decision for our employees. Arrow really cares about how customers and employees are treated, and those were the two things we were really concerned about when we started to think about a sale. We are so happy to be able to offer our long-time customers an expanded range of services."

Marty Gagnon
Tropicare Termite and Pest Control
Land O'Lakes, FL

Falcon Lawn & Pest



"We first met Emily (Emily Thomas Kendrick, CEO of Arrow) in the 1990's, and we had talked with other members of the Arrow management team over the years. We always believed they would be the best fit for our employees, so this is a dream come true for us. Arrow is dedicated to hiring, training and retaining the best people, and we are so happy that this experienced team we've built over the years will be a part of the Arrow culture and have additional opportunities for growth."

Louis Witherington
Falcon Lawn & Pest
Orlando and Wildwood, FL

Boltin Pest Control



"We feel very fortunate to have connected with Arrow. We've talked to many companies over the years, and we know Arrow will take the best care of our employees due to their very strong family culture. They have greater opportunities for growth. After meeting Emily (Emily Thomas Kendrick, CEO of Arrow) and her team during the diligence phase, we knew we were selecting the right company."

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Boltin Pest Control
Dade City, FL

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FIVE FOR THE AGES

PCT and Syngenta honored five industry professionals as 2023 Crown Leadership Award winners at PestWorld '23.

Photos by Rachel Robertson Photography

PCT AND SYNGENTA recognized five industry professionals as 2023 Crown Leadership Awards during a special reception at October's NPMA PestWorld 2023 in Hawaii. The Class of 2023 includes:

- Ted Brayton, Griggs & Browne, Abington, Mass.
- Jim Fredericks, PPMA, Fairfax, Va.
- Justin McCauley, McCauley Services, Bryant, Ark.
- Eve Pappas, Hoffman's Exterminating, Mantua, N.J.
- Changlu Wang, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

Since 1988, the Crown Leadership Awards have been presented annually to pest management professionals, university educators, consultants, industry distributors and association officials who uphold the highest standards of industry ethics, while contributing their time and talent to a wide range of professional and civic organizations.

Also at this year's Leadership ceremony, PCT and Syngenta posthumously presented a "Lifetime Achievement Award" to past Crown Leadership Award winner Bob Rosenberg. Rosenberg, who spent 27 years with the National Pest Management Association, including serving as CEO (2013-2016), passed away on Sept. 10 at 72. The award was voted on by past Leadership winners.

What follows is a photo review from this year's ceremony. Visit crownleadership.pctonline.com to read about this year's winners and watch videos from the ceremony. **PCT**

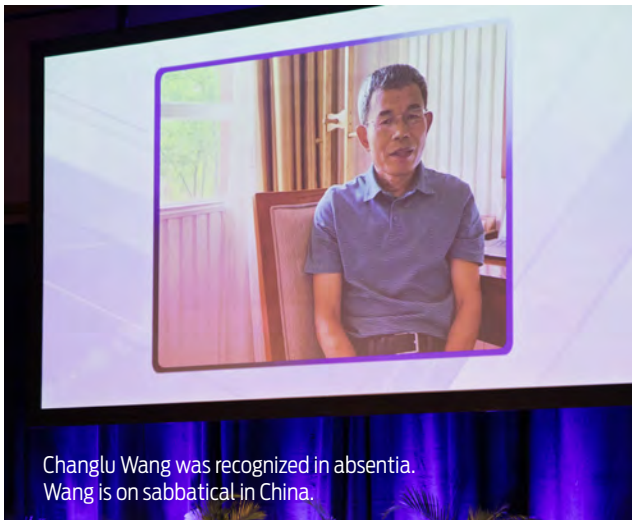




2023 Crown Leadership winners (from left to right): Justin McCauley, Ted Brayton, Eve Pappas, Jim Fredericks and Changlu Wang (inset photo).



Left to right: Jen and Justin McCauley, and family members Blaik, Mike, Ryder, Loren and Zac McCauley.



Changlu Wang was recognized in absentia. Wang is on sabbatical in China.



Left to right: Syngenta's Marshall Gaster, Logan, Eve Pappas and PCT's Jodi Dorsch.



Left: Jim Fredericks says a few words after accepting his Crown Leadership Award. Below: PCT's Brad Harbison (left) and Syngenta's Marshall Gaster (right) present Ted Brayton with his 2023 Crown Leadership award.



The Crown Leadership Lifetime Achievement Award was posthumously presented to Bob Rosenberg. PCT's Jodi Dorsch and Syngenta's Marshall Gaster (far left and far right) presented the award to NPMA's Executive Leadership team of Domique Stumpf, Andy Architect and Jim Fredericks.





CHARLES SILCOX, Ph.D., Product Development Manager, AMGUARD

5 QUESTIONS WITH CHARLES SILCOX

As Product Development Manager for over 11 years with AMGUARD™ Environmental Technologies, Charles Silcox, Ph.D., serves as a resource for customers interested in building effective and profitable mosquito control businesses.

1 Who is AMGUARD?

AMGUARD Environmental Technologies is the specialty markets division of AMVAC Chemical Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of American Vanguard Corporation. AMGUARD portfolio companies include TyraTech, Inc., Envance Technologies, LLC, and OHP, Inc. From our Research Triangle Park, N.C. headquarters and labs, AMGUARD discovers, develops, and commercializes a diverse portfolio of proven chemistries, innovative technologies, and green solutions into the U.S. public health, pest control, ornamental & greenhouse, golf, lawn & landscape, food service, and consumer markets. At our core, we are innovators. We are committed to protecting the population from disease vectors, mitigating structural pest damage, creating healthy food service environments and outdoor living spaces, and maintaining outdoor sports and recreation venues. Our mission is to provide our customers with powerful technology solutions to keep their businesses strong and growing.

2 Have there been any changes to the Nuvan® Prostrips® and Nuvan® Prostrips®+ labels?

AMGUARD recently worked with the NYDEC and the USEPA to address contradictory language on our previous labels; specifically creating label language that clarifies their use in homes for bed bug control. A key change that occurred when the new labels were approved is that both products are now classified as Restricted Use Pesticides. AMGUARD will begin producing the Restricted Use products early in 2024. Existing products with the current label in the marketplace may be used until their stocks are depleted.

3 How will these changes impact Professional Pest Management companies?

The biggest change is that the products will be for sale to and use only by certified applicators or persons under their direct supervision and only for those uses covered by the Certified Applicator's Certification. AMGUARD receives hundreds of customer service calls each year about our Nuvan Prostrips products, and roughly 70 percent of these calls are from homeowners wanting to control bed bugs. These people will now need to use the services of a professional pest management company.

4 Do the amended labels include new uses/opportunities?

First, it is now clear on the product labels that Nuvan Prostrips may be used in rooms in homes to control bed bugs. Second, the new labels allow their use in certain sites in hospitals. The previous labels totally prohibited their use in hospitals. They may now be used in appropriate sites within hospitals to control bed bug-infested gurneys, beds, electronic equipment, or other items. Finally, we receive many calls each year on using Nuvan Prostrips to control bed bugs in automobiles. This use is now allowed provided the treatment is performed by a certified applicator.

5 Can Nuvan Directed Spray Aerosol be used for bed bug control?

Absolutely! In fact, Nuvan Directed Spray Aerosol was developed primarily for bed bug control as a companion product to our Nuvan Prostrips. It kills bed bugs both on contact and through vapor action and provides excellent control of all life stages — eggs, nymphs, and adults. It is labeled for localized surface applications in homes, apartments, hotels, motels, cabins, garages, and basements, as well as in and around commercial and industrial buildings. It may be applied to mattresses, box springs, bed frames and headboards to control bed bugs.

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CULTURE PLAYBOOK



Building a winning team takes talent. But to get the most out of your squad, company culture can be the not-so-secret weapon. Here's how pest control companies can focus on people and come out on top. **By Kristen Hampshire**

Every Friday morning, Scarlett Nolen sets aside time to write handwritten "Thank You" notes to team members who are celebrating work anniversaries. "Throughout the year, I end up reaching out to every single employee," said the president of Truly Nolen, which employs about 1,100 people across more than 80 U.S. locations.

"It all started with one man knocking on one door," Nolen said of the vast growth since her dad started the business. But in many ways, it's still the way it always was with the Golden Rule as its guiding principle: Treat others as you want to be treated.

"I call us the big-little company," Nolen said. "While our brand is spread out in a lot of places, every single employee has my cell phone number."

She tells them, 'Call me, text me, email me—any time.'" And Nolen means it. During orientations, she scribbles her contact information on the whiteboard. She remembers her father giving out their home phone number to "anyone and everyone." "It was not his office line, we had a phone at home, and if it rang, he made himself available even if it was during dinner," she remembered.



Scarlett Nolen

It's not unusual to see Nolen hanging around in the company's parking lots. There's a reason. "It's the best place to talk to get really raw feedback as partners are coming and going," she said. "I bounce ideas off of them and a lot of times, the best ones really do come from the front lines."

These efforts make a big impression on Truly Nolen's partners (the term the company uses for its employees) and, ultimately, the company's performance.

Gallup reports that 84 percent of the value of an S&P 500 company is dependent on talents, skills, knowledge, work ethic and employee health.

"As people, we like to have a purpose," said King Jones III, CEO, CT Pest Solutions, Naugatuck, Conn. "It goes beyond working every day to support your family and pay bills. Employees need to make a living, but they mostly want to feel appreciated, respected and valued."

But how?

It's one thing to *talk* culture. Actually *living* it requires intentionality and commitment. It's not easy. This explains why a Gallup organizational culture study showed only two in 10 employees feel connected to their company's culture. The good news is, there's evidence that more businesses today are focused on creating workplaces that speak to team members' desire to make meaningful contributions. Gallup noted an increase in respondents who feel "strongly connected" from 16 percent in 2018 to 22 percent in 2023.



King Jones III

A culture connection increases employee engagement, and 25 percent of Gallup participants in its organizational culture program reported growth in their workforce during a three-year period. And over five years, 85 percent recorded a net profit increase, while 128 percent cited better customer relations.

Nolen said, "When we treat our people



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as human beings, it's a win-win-win situation. It's a win for the customer, win for the company and win for employees, and that third win occurs because we do not make any big decisions without checking all three boxes."

WHAT DOES CULTURE REALLY MEAN? "Culture is tough because it's not tangible," Jones said.

This is certainly the case. You can say a business has a real family feel, but what does that look like and how does it work? You can say an organization is transparent, but how and what does this ultimately mean for employees? Here are some ways to back up the talk.



Your company's mission, vision and values can be more than a corporate exercise and words to post on your website.

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"*We treat everyone like family.*" As with the Golden Rule-guided culture at Truly Nolen, Bobby Jenkins also keeps his culture vision simple at ABC Home & Commercial Services based in Austin, Texas. "Work hard and be nice," is the adage.

Jenkins' father started the business with six employees and one office 40 years ago. Now, it has 1,050 team members and nine locations. He describes the culture as "a family business," but what he means aside from its roots is that it's a business of families. Forty percent of employees have a relative who also works at ABC. "It's a powerful attribute," he said, and contributes to the personalized and caring culture that can be a challenge to cultivate with growth.

Family members working together validates that ABC is a great place to work, Jenkins said. "That starts the relationships on a positive step when someone joins our team," he added. "Whatever your family nucleus, you care for family the most. So, if we can take that family feeling and culture that we care for each other in that way, it makes ABC a place where people want to be and want to stay."



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"We believe in transparency." Transparency is another potentially nebulous descriptor that's easy to toss out in a board meeting but takes a real effort to execute. At ABC, transparency means monthly meetings with an ownership dashboard that reports numbers from revenue to profitability and customer satisfaction. "I share the good, the bad and the ugly," Jenkins said.


Bobby Jenkins

Then he reviews key metrics — the *how-we-are-doing* data.

"We have a very aggressive and appropriate profit-sharing program for every single person who works at ABC, and this type of benefit is a statement that says, 'We are all in this together, building this business profitably,' and they realize how they can affect the profitability," Jenkins said.

"Employees are not wondering what's going on behind the curtain," he added. "When it's a great month, we celebrate. When it's not, we talk about what we need to do to make the next month a great month. Everyone has a stake in the company, and we all benefit when we are successful."

"We live our values." As for the mission, vision, values — the poster of who you are and what you do — is it more than a corporate exercise and words to post on a website? Ideally, yes.

At Scherzinger Pest Control in Cincinnati, Ohio, there are three core values: have a service heart; be success-driven; and value reputation. The company rewards three team members every year who exemplify these characteristics. On a giant bulletin board in the office, employees can leave notes about what they've seen colleagues do beyond the call of duty.

"We had an employee bust out someone's laundry room window because he saw the dryer was on fire and he put out the fire," said Kurt Scherzinger, president. "One employee cleaned a customer's house when she had to go into the hospital and went over on a Sunday because their housekeeper was ill."

Before this program, Scherzinger had success-driven awards centered on sales. "But there is so much more than selling," Scherzinger said. Rewarding those who elevate the company's reputation, add value to customers' service and just do the right thing is even more important.

"Whether your employees tell you or not, everyone likes to be recognized," Scherzinger said. "It's about making sure you find the positives."

Jones added, "The biggest thing when it comes to any program or initiative is where it comes from." Is it consistent with



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the company's values? What message does it send to your people? What is the ultimate purpose? How will it work?

Jones uses his salary-plus-commission pay plan as an example. The compensation structure includes key performance indicator (KPI) bonuses. "You'll always get people who haven't worked with a plan like this, and if they don't understand it, they might not think it's fair," Jones said. "This is where transparency comes into play. To say, 'This is the pay plan,' is not enough.

Copy That, Culture Hacks

Check out what companies across industries are doing to make a workplace difference.

There's no short-cut to creating an engaging, fulfilling culture that retains employees like the ultimate gluetrap. So, the idea of a hack is a bit misleading. But you don't have to reinvent the wheel, and there are ways to revise cultural "phenomenon." Here's how some organizations in the professional and service arenas are finding success.



People Networks

Employees bring different points of view to the workplace. The financial and banking institution CIBC applauds this. Its employee-led resource groups called People Networks help employees find community and connection. Co-worker groups meet regularly to plan activities and organize volunteer events. The take-away: Big companies can go small by structuring cohort, collaborative pods.



Design Your Day

Dow Chemical's manufacturing employees have kids, after-school sports, aging parents, grocery lists and personal demands. So instead of a rigid schedule, the company adopted a Design Your Day policy. Team members still work shifts, but they choose them based on what works for their family's needs.

It's OK to not be OK

At American Express, the mounting global mental health conversation translated into a Grief and Loss Support program for employees with one-on-one counseling from licensed therapists. It also launched a campaign called, "Here for you. Here for each other." It includes self-care starters with webinars, blog posts and talking points for leadership to share with teams. The takeaway: Ask for help.

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IS IT TIME TO SELL?

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You have to coach them through it."

So, Jones will explain strategies for lowering cancellations, which maintains or helps increase commissions. "I coach them through the process of building value and increasing sales potential so they can boost their KPI bonus," he said. "And I'll just give them a call and ask, 'How are you doing?'"

"We promote mental health and wellness." While there are tangible benefits like health insurance, creating a culture of wellness is entirely different. But it's important because, as Nolen said, "There is a dotted line to the customer if we have healthy employees because they are in a better position to serve our clients."

Nolen instituted the Hundred Dollars of Wellness initiative. Each August, which is National Wellness Month, the company gives every employee $100 to spend in any way to kickstart or support their health. "It can be physical, mental, nutritional, whatever that means to them," she said, adding that with a 1,100-person workforce, the program is an investment. But it pays off.

"I love when they share their photos of how they are focusing on their wellbeing," Nolen said. "One person used it for jump ropes, and another bought a paddleboard. A family bought a soccer ball and nets. It's important to stay in touch with what is happening with the whole person."

Mental health is close to Nolen's heart. Before she entered the pest control industry, she was a therapist. Now, across industries, there's a greater focus on mental health, triggered by the pandemic and less stigma, and Nolen wants to be sure team members have resources. "I know a lot of companies do this in some capacity," she said, "but we beefed up the investment in resources and some employees have shared their personal experiences with those resources, which is a win and rewarding.

"When you say, 'Your mental health is important,' and you put your money where your mouth is, it reinforces who we are," said Nolen.

LEAN IN AND LISTEN UP. What doesn't work when building a strong culture? "You can't rule with an iron fist," Scherzinger said. "Obviously, you want the final say, but you must listen. The easiest way to diminish a culture is to not be approachable and have a my-way-or-the-highway approach."

Scherzinger and his brother Eric, vice president of procurement and marketing, were fielding complaints about working on Saturdays, and they listened carefully. "A lot of our newer employees have children who are involved in activities, and they were saying, 'It's hard to make my kids' events when I have to work on the weekend,'" Scherzinger said. "So, we stepped back and did a trial."



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The test involved not offering customers Saturday appointments. "My brother and I also have children and we said, 'We don't want to work Saturdays because our kids are in sports, so why would we make our employees do it?'"

They officially made a change. The workweek is Monday through Friday with optional Saturday hours for employees who want to work versus requiring the entire team to be on duty every other Saturday. Instead, workweek days are about an hour longer. "We told them it was a trade-off, and they were all fine with it," Scherzinger said.

Another change prompted by employee feedback was retooling the mustache-only policy because of respirators technicians wore for some services. Pushback was percolating. Then it came out: "I never wear the respirator, why can't I grow a beard?" some asked.

With some research, the Scherzinger brothers found a product that could replace a respirator that was only required for a small portion of service. "We then changed our policy," he said.

Scherzinger laughed, "One employee came up to me and said, 'Man. If you keep changing all this stuff that we bring up as issues, I'm not going to have anything left to complain about!'"

Pleased, he replied to his colleague, "That's my goal, man."

This illustrates a "strong culture of looking from within," Scherzinger explained, relating that he and his brother started in the family business as technicians out of college. "Some of the employees who are still here trained us, so they will be the first to say, 'I trained him.' And we focus on promoting from within because we find their peers respect them and it shows growth."

The key is to give team members tools so they can be heard in the first place.

Truly Nolen uses a platform called Viva Engage, which creates a sort of internal Facebook community to connect employees across the country. They can post everything from successes on the job to dog pictures with hashtags attached. "We get a lot of that," Nolen said, pleased at the camaraderie the tool has fostered.

Periodically, the company holds contests, asking partners to share photos with themes. Submissions are judged and prizes doled out. "We have played around with it for the last eight years, and the level of engagement is really high now," said Nolen. "Now, we can put faces and names and personalities to our partners, and we've completely eliminated the walls that would prevent interactions with partners nationwide."



Aside from listening to employees' ideas, equally important is promoting conversations about personal and professional development — growth potential. "All of our core values are built around growing the business and growing it properly, growing relationships and growing community," Jenkins said. "My main job is to grow ABC, and then we can create opportunities for people to sink in roots and have careers here and be like those who have 20-, 30- and 40-year tenures."

At ABC Home & Commercial Services, 11 senior management team members have worked there for at least 26 years.

Longevity stems from employees acting as stakeholders. That's why Nolen advocates for creating what she calls a "front-line feedback loop" that includes team members who are directly involved with customers to contribute to decision-making. "They need to have a seat at the table," she said. "If you do not have their buy-in and insight, your plans will never meet their potential."

WHAT GIVES? "In today's world, people want to work for an organization that they believe is making a positive impact in the community," Jenkins said. "We are taking that to the next level, so it's personal."

With its Ant Eaters Doing Good initiative, team members get a paid volunteer day every six months to spend time helping an organization of their choice. The company tacks an extra $5 per hour to employees' wages that day and matches what they donate.

ABC Home & Commercial Services hired a person specifically to guide these types of efforts who holds the title "philanthropic employee engagement." This point person looks for volunteer opportunities and organizes company-wide events and programs. Jenkins said, "Philanthropy is the best way to create a culture where people can make an impact. It also shows employees, 'what you care about, we want to support you and your efforts.'"

Boots on the ground sends a message that community involvement and helping others matters. During recovery efforts following Hurrican Ian last year, Nolen personally went to the Naples, Fla., area, where she is from, and gathered a team to help. Truly Nolen's Public Relations Manager Toby Srebnik said, "When you have a president who wants to be involved on the ground level, it speaks volumes and makes your employees feel that much more important. It wasn't a setup for a photo. It was her wanting to be involved."

On a similar note, Truly Spooktacular is an annual October philanthropic effort



where Truly Nolen partners with 40 hospitals in 13 states and two Canadian provinces. Each receives 50 pumpkins, face decorating kits and mouse car stress balls, and employees spend a couple of hours with children and their families.

"We dress up in costumes and have a really silly Halloween celebration, and it's something our partners look forward to every year," Nolen said. "It has nothing to do with bugs or pest control, but everything to do with connecting with our community as a team."

Especially since the pandemic, employees are reflecting more carefully on the work they do and why, with 83 percent saying "finding meaning in day-to-day work" is a priority, according to a 2023 Global Culture Report by the O.C. Tanner Institute, which produces employee recognition software. Sixty-nine percent of respondents would change their jobs for more fulfillment.

Jenkins said, "Employees become engaged when they're doing things aside from work that make the community better."

So, what's the secret sauce for a culture that attracts and retains employees, is community-minded and checks all the business-centered boxes like profitability and growth? That depends on your workplace. The key is to first look inside.

That's what Jones did.

He felt distracted from his own "why" and joined NPMA's Entrepreneurial Leadership Program (ELP), a training and mentorship cohort. He zeroed in on his purpose and built out a plan to execute a culture and business to fulfill it. "I had to invest in myself as a leader to continue growing and helping the business, and that way, our employees could continue growing," he explained.

Jones likens it to strapping on your oxygen mask before you help the person sitting next to you on the plane.

"I realized this was a big turning point for me, the business and our people," he said. **PCT**

The author is a regular contributor to PCT magazine.

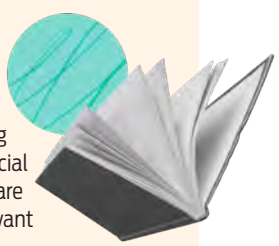


LET'S DO THIS Explore out-of-the-box ways to make business more personal — and productive.

Meetings in Strange Places

They feel like non-meetings and take place in what King Jones III calls "strange places," but what he means by that is, not the office at CT Pest Solutions, Naugatuck, Conn. "We'll go out to lunch or have a cookout — something different," he said, adding that a more casual environment away from the workplace encourages employees to share ideas because they're comfortable. "We'll just talk, and it doesn't feel like a meeting, but we are having one. We have an agenda, but it's not so formal."

Join the Club



Book club. Fishing club. Wine club. Outdoor sports club. These have nothing to do with pest control, but the help build great teams. "We have clubs that anyone can join, or they can create their own, and it facilitates employees coming together," said Bobby Jenkins, adding that it is a talent retention insurance policy at ABC Home & Commercial Services in Austin, Texas. "If you have friends where you work, you are less likely to leave that place of work to go somewhere else. And we want people to do things they enjoy and share that."

Along for the Ride

Truly Week is a tradition when partners (employees) at Truly Nolen who have never run a route hop on board to explore day-to-day operations. "Those who are in the office get out in the field, and leadership does the same," said Scarlett Nolen. This helps connect departments and keeps administrative and leadership close to the purpose. "As a company grows, your leadership is susceptible to becoming removed. That can be a fatal flaw," she said. Truly Week is a concerted effort to revisit the company's roots, when her father would personally knock on doors.

Let's Make a Deal

Kurt Scherzinger approached vendors, including Scherzinger Pest Control's cell phone provider and truck dealership, to find out if they could score discounts on personal purchases made by the Cincinnati, Ohio-based company's employees. "We give you a lot of business, would you consider offering our employees discounts?" he asked. They said, "Sure." So now, employees get 18 percent off their cell phone bill if they show their pay stub to the provider, and the dealership provides a percentage off a new or used car, with a 10 percent discount on service.

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2023 TECHNICIAN of the YEAR AWARDS

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RESIDENTIAL TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR
Matt Hall
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TERMITE TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR
Marvin Dalton
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COMMERCIAL TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR
Joe Kuligoski
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2023 TECHNICIAN of the YEAR AWARDS

Achieving More Together

December is a time to reflect on past accomplishments, and for the last 28 years the pest control industry has recognized in December the achievements of front-line service professionals with the PCT Technician of the Year Awards. As sponsor of these awards, BASF is privileged to be associated with this program.



Schuh

Each winner is chosen by a panel of industry experts (Bobby Corrigan, Richard Kramer, Fred Whitford and Bob Davis), all of whom have a keen eye for identifying the traits needed to be not just good, but *great* service professionals. On behalf of BASF, I would like to congratulate this year's honorees: Marvin Dalton, Accel Pest & Termite Control Virginia Beach, Va. — termite category; Matt Hall, Rottler Pest Solutions, St. Louis, Mo. — residential category; and Tom Kuligoski, Rose Pest Solutions, Saginaw, Mich. — commercial category.

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Congratulations again to Marvin, Matt and Tom, and thank for all you do to raise the industry's level of professionalism. We hope PCT's readers enjoy, and are inspired by, reading their stories in the following pages.

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A Signature Service Built on Communication, Investigation

Thinking like the customer — and the pest — drives customer retention for **MATT HALL,** PCT's 2023 Residential Technician of the Year. **BY** Mary Baldwin-Szel

Matt Hall knows how to build relationships with customers. Working as a paramedic, he developed and leveraged his communication skills to uncover issues and help people — skills he continues to use as a service technician with Rottler Pest Solutions, Chesterfield, Mo.

"It's very similar to being in my previous health care field," Hall said. "There should always be a source for any issues that pop up, and you have to do some investigation work to figure it out and then, once you succeed at it, you get that — I call it a dopamine rush — because you succeeded in making people happy."

Hall does make people happy — both clients and colleagues — which is why he is being recognized as PCT's 2023 Residential Technician of the Year.

FROM EMS TO PMP.

How did Hall move from an EMS team to Rottler? As EMS work became more and more draining, he found the pest control opportunity "kept popping up randomly on the internet and it sparked my interest."

A profession that allowed him to "help people and then actually sleep in my own bed at night" proved alluring, so he "took a plunge" and joined Rottler. The company provided on-site training and hands-on learning that quickly hooked Hall, who said he "absolutely fell in love with it."

TRIPLING HIS ROUTE.

Success came fairly quickly for Hall, who grew his route in Chesterfield from about 100 to up to 300 accounts a month in the first five years, realizing a retention rate of 97 percent.

"If I could craft a perfect pest control technician with personality and technical background and ability to run routes, … Matt would be the perfect example," said Aaron Bickel, branch manager in Chesterfield. He noted that Hall exemplifies two traits he seeks in new employees: humbleness and caring. Bickel said Hall "just will not quit until he's made that customer happy and the problem has been resolved."

In solving problems, Hall noted, "You do have to do a thorough investigation of the whole picture to actually get to the source or the problem."

A deep investigation of landscaping, surroundings and other factors may reveal "random things that the customers might not be aware of," like holes and cracks, Hall said. "We can seal those up as a preventative [measure] when that might not even be an issue that we were originally sent out for."

A more extreme example of the importance of examining facts and clues arose when Hall was servicing a swim school area that was infested with German cockroaches. Weekly Wednesday morning visits included inspections and follow ups — and, still, roaches. Vexed and bewildered, Hall continued treatments and talked to colleagues, but didn't find an answer until one Wednesday when he arrived a bit late. Hall recalled arriving at 10:30 a.m., right when a power-washing truck pulled up. He realized the swim school was being regularly power-washed immediately after he finished, thus washing away Hall's applications.

Another memorable encounter was when Hall was assisting a new technician who was having trouble capturing a raccoon. The homeowner suggested Hall "run to the gas station and grab a hot dog," along with a large bag of marshmallows. When the puzzled Hall said he'd already had lunch, the homeowner said the food was for the raccoon, not the technician. Hall had the raccoon the next morning.

JOINING THE FAMILY.

While also doing some commercial work, Hall likes residential because "not only do you get to meet the people, you meet their family." Sending these customers holiday cards of his own family helps cement the relationship. "I don't want to be known as just some random guy that comes and sprays the house," Hall said.

Besides building relationships, Hall tries to help his customers understand the full value of his services. "If you paint a picture and detail what you did, you're showing your customer what they're actually paying for," he said.

He also likes "educating customers on the biology [of pests] and the [treatment] expectations," noting "not everything is immediate."

For Hall, this treatment often leverages an IPM (Integrated Pest Management) approach.

"You don't always have to spray or treat or place any products out on the inside of homes," Hall said, noting exclusion and other outdoor work can help reduce pest control issues and minimize product use.

BUILDING TRUST.

With his route covering a highly populated area, Hall depends on software to optimize his route, but added that if any of his customers are having an issue, he is usually only "5 to 10 minutes away." He also considers the customer's nature when scheduling, knowing that some clients may be quick and easy while others may require more time.

"After being with them for so long, you kind of figure out their habits," he said, adding that one should be ready for surprises and that "knowing your customers and their lifestyle habits" is also crucial.

With each visit, "I always ask how their day is going — about their family and kids," he said, noting the importance of treating customers with empathy and compassion. At the same time, "you can't sugar coat things because then people will expect a different outcome. So sometimes you have to be direct and honest, but in a compassionate way."

As a result, Hall said his customers trust that he'll keep "the services going where they really don't have to worry about it. All of this experience, knowledge, positive attitude and persistence make Hall a natural mentor.

"His thought process, technical ability and willingness to teach/grow other techs' abilities are unmatched within our branch, and his work ethic is second to none," Bickel noted. Thus, Hall trains technicians, helps others with challenging jobs and shares route expansion ideas.

"Perhaps his greatest skill is the ability to remain calm, cool and collected under the most stressful of circumstances," said Bickel.

Hall's comfortable manner and welcoming spirit are evident when you talk with him. It's easy to imagine him showing new technicians around the office, making introductions and addressing concerns. Hall said he believes in "no judgment for any questions" and works to find answers when he doesn't have them.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Hall's advice for new service technicians is "to act like whatever you're going for," be it a bug or mouse. "Pretend like you're the problem and [ask], how are you getting in there?" he said.

But, more basically, Hall said technicians should "treat everybody like you want to be treated." He said treating the customer's house with respect, as you would your own, can build bridges. ★



Matt Hall, PCT's Residential Technician of the Year, making an exterior perimeter application.

The author is a Cleveland, Ohio-based writer.



An Unwavering Dedication to His Craft

MARVIN DALTON uses his construction knowledge and attention to detail to provide signature termite control service.

BY Laura Straub

Marvin Dalton, PCT's 2023 Termite Technician of the Year from Accel Pest & Termite Control, Virginia Beach, Va., never underestimates the power of a first impression, especially when arriving at a termite job.

"You're there to provide a service for somebody's home — the place that holds their greatest memories and most valued possessions," Dalton said. "You're there so that home can stand the test of time and continue to serve as their place of peace."

That's a big responsibility, so the first thing on Dalton's to-do list is to put the customer at ease.

"Communication between the customer and their technician is invaluable. Good communication and honesty naturally create trust," said Dalton. "They're not just putting their trust in a company to provide a service, they are putting their trust in you, the technician."

As a termite technician, Dalton's goal is to create a professional relationship that spans generations. He aims to provide service that reminds customers of the elusive good old days.

Once he's sure the trust is there and the customer is confident in the diagnosis he's providing, Dalton gets to work.

A FORMER MASON.

Dalton brings a unique perspective to the job. Years ago, he was building a career as a mason. Dalton learned how structures are assembled while working at a masonry company with his cousin, Dan Dalton. But in 2008, the housing market plummeted, sending the economy into a recession. They were both let go.

A seemingly insignificant connection, however, led the cousins down a new path. A service technician from a pest control company that serviced Dan's house mentioned they were hiring. Dan signed on, and when another position opened, Dalton joined him. Dalton didn't realize it then, but his passion for helping people paired with his construction acumen were perfect for termite work.

Dalton learned the ropes from his area manager, Shon Vodila, and his service manager, John Reid. Just as he does with his customers, Dalton left quite a first impression on Reid.

"I hired him as a termite technician, which in our market includes not only termite treatments, but ancillary work such as crawlspace work, vapor barriers, custom crawl doors and vents," said Reid. "I remember then, as I do now, being impressed with his versatility and the skills that he possessed, having come from a construction background."

CHANCE ENCOUNTER.

For seven years, Dalton worked for that same company that serviced his cousin Dan's house. During that time, Vodila and Reid started their own pest control company, Accel Pest & Termite Control. In 2017, a chance encounter with Vodila — they were stopped at the same stoplight, which led to grabbing lunch — presented Dalton with an opportunity to join the Accel team.

It didn't hurt that Dalton's cousin, Dan, had already been working for Accel for a few months. Dalton jumped at the chance to work alongside his cousin again. Plus, Dan only had good things to say about the up-and-coming company.

STELLAR EXPOSURES

"He was impressed with the vision both Shon and John had for Accel — a company that focused on core values and principles," Dalton recalled. "They had a vision that a company could focus on family, quality work over quantity, and above all, making customer service its No. 1 priority. I too shared their vision."

Since joining Accel, Dalton's career has taken off. "I have not only watched him grow, I have literally watched him age, and mature, both personally and professionally," Reid said.

He watched Dalton as he met his wife Michelle; the couple now have children. He's also watched Dalton enter the industry for a job and make it a career.

Dalton's talents have helped propel Accel. "He is consistent, somewhat of a perfectionist, and is very dedicated to ensuring each of our customer's satisfaction," said Reid. "This type of leadership by example has only helped to strengthen and solidify our termite department."

SIGNATURE SERVICE.

As a top technician at Accel, what does a termite call look like for Dalton?

Before he even arrives, he reviews any notes from the sales adviser and a graph of the home. Then he introduces himself and starts a thorough inspection.

"I'm looking for the water cut off, plumbing, clean outs, moisture problems, any ground electrical or sprinkler systems. I'm looking to see if the house has a crawlspace. The property could also be a townhouse with an adjacent wall butting against another structure," said Dalton.

He's looking for moisture damage around fascia boards and windows. He also wants to be sure there's nothing that could cause problems when providing a termite treatment or could cause damage to the property.

Once he's done, Dalton starts his interior inspection. It's no surprise that what he's looking for always ties back to his construction background.

"I like to start at the door and work my way around the exterior foundation walls. I then move on to inspect the interior and end with the crawlspace inspection," said Dalton. "You should pay close attention to dirt filled porches, the garage and fireplace. As you're inspecting the crawlspace, look for moisture issues, like leaking pipes, condensation underneath the moisture barrier, or moisture collecting on the ductwork. These could cause major problems later on."

He also pays close attention to any imperfections along the walls, baseboards or window seals. "A good flashlight is a must," he said.

Armed with that good flashlight, Dalton has been able to tackle even the most challenging jobs. He'll never forget the crawlspace clean out and termite treatment he did at one specific abandoned home. With grass as high as his hips, it was obvious the house had been sitting empty for some time.

"Once my team and I removed everything from the crawlspace, the extent of the damage was unlike anything I had ever seen," he said. "Eighty percent of the crawlspace was infested with termite activity or damage. There were multiple termite tubes the size of my palm. One was so bad, it ran to a main sewer line. Another actually formed an indention on the cast-iron pipe from the termites traveling up and down for so long."

But he carefully treated the structure, and at his 90-day follow up, there wasn't one new active termite shelter.

"This work requires a simple willingness to roll up your sleeves and do whatever it takes to get the job done," said Dalton. "Termite work warrants an unwavering work ethic and taking satisfaction watching a job transform from its beginning stages to the final product you're providing the customer."

For Dalton, treating a termite infestation is just as rewarding as it was when he first started out in the industry, but now he also has the opportunity to pass along his skills.

"Whether it's molding new up-and-coming termite technicians, performing hands-on training or taking phone calls from colleagues asking for guidance, I thrive when I'm part of a team, working toward a common goal and vision," Dalton said. "That is what Accel has given me, and that is what I hope to continue to give Accel." ★

The author is a Cleveland, Ohio-based writer.



Marvin Dalton, shown applying a termiticide by rodding, uses his construction knowledge as termite technician.

Attention to Detail Drives His Success

TOM KULIGOSKI has found a home at Rose Pest Solutions providing exemplary commercial pest management services.

BY Ed DeMask



Tom Kuligoski (right) is adept at communicating with commercial clients.

For Tom Kuligoski, having one door closed opened the door for another opportunity he had never considered.

Kuligoski graduated from college with a criminal justice degree, but at the time there were few openings in the Saginaw, Mich., area for law enforcement professionals — and he wasn't interested in commuting or moving to Detroit. When a friend mentioned the perks of being a service technician for Rose Pest Solutions, he applied and was hired once the company had an opening (a few months later).

Now, 18 years later, Kuligoski is PCT's 2023 Commercial Technician of the Year, a celebration of a career still very much active, but one that almost wasn't.

According to his direct report, Ray Roenicke, district supervisor for Rose's Saginaw office, Kuligoski is the type of employee they wish they could clone. "He's a tremendous technician with a unique ability to provide service," Roenicke said. "I wish I had 10 of him. He has the ability to service large, audited accounts that require a lot of work and a lot of responsibility."

Kuligoski works in the "Thumb" of Michigan — an area in the lower peninsula of the state that encompasses Saginaw south to Flint and east on I-69 to Lake Huron, and areas to the north. It's a very rural area, and Kuligoski likes the tranquil drives along his route.

"The 'Thumb' is kind of different; it's more rural, less cities and more villages and small towns. My clients are organic farms, food warehouses, grain elevators. It's kind of why I like doing this route," he said, noting how nice the ride is during times of the year such as fall. "Today was rainy, but the colors are starting to change so you have golden cornfields, and the trees are turning yellow and red. It's a relaxing drive and the people themselves are a little easier going."

WHAT IT TAKES. Kuligoski has spent the majority of his career servicing commercial accounts. His route is approximately 95 percent commercial, and Roenicke said Kuligoski has the perfect personality and temperament for dealing with commercial customers.

"Tom has that personality where people love him because he has the ability to deal with all types of people," Roenicke said. "One time, he had a situation where a client kind of went off on him about something, questioning him about paperwork they thought was missing. But Tom got him to calm down and come to an understanding of what was going on and that nothing was missing, and the customer ended up apologizing because he was having a bad day."

Having a day-in, day-out mentality is truly important to achieving success as a commercial technician, according to Kuligoski. Also, never overlook the importance of calling a colleague, he said, as nobody is

ROSE PEST SOLUTIONS

all-knowing. "Being a good technician is going in every day, doing the work again and again," he said. "You need to ask yourself, 'Would you be happy paying for the service you just provided?' I look at it that way. I get in situations, and someone asks for something, and they might not need it, but I try to break it down and give them real-world solutions. We are getting our roof done at my home, and hopefully we are getting the same quality work that I would do."

AUDITED ACCOUNTS.

Many of Kuligoski's clients require third-party audits. Roenicke said those customers depend on Rose so much they are more like partners.

"Audited accounts require certifications to be able to do business with certain facilities [such as big box stores and supermarkets] and they require the audits, and they have to document the reason why a situation occurred," Kuligoski said. "We're here to offer solutions. You don't get results unless you have the cooperation and partnership with the client."

Kuligoski's daily route is anywhere from two to six customers, and each stop could range from 20 minutes for small companies to three or four hours for the large ones. Kuligoski said he doesn't even look at the clock. "You just go to work. Today, for example, I have a big sugar factory, so I'm checking devices, logbooks, talking to contacts, checking light traps and whenever the work gets done, the work gets done."

For doing top-notch audits, one of the keys is meticulous record keeping. "When working, I use a handheld device, and I'll pause and take notes," he said. "We have a section for technician comments. I tell them to read the tech comments and that'll tell you what we caught, if something was broken, if something had to be resolved, because that's a summary. On these accounts, you have to go slower because you don't want to forget to write something down on the report." If Kuligoski finds something broken during the audit, he'll make a note — "crushed by forklift truck" for example — before moving on, he said.

Kuligoski says he then gathers all of that information and goes over it with his contact (like a plant superintendent), so they can hear from him firsthand. If he is able to take pictures and show them, he will. For example, if he finds a door broken or a gap in a wall, he will snap pictures to show the client. More than likely, he said, they already know, but the photo backs it up, he said.



Tom Kuligoski is diligent about checking bait stations and keeping records, important practices, especially in commercial accounts.

COMMUNICATION KEYS.

There are many hallmarks of creating a great relationship with a customer, but two of the most important are providing solid customer service and being a good communicator. This ranges from giving insight into services that are requested but not necessarily needed and offering suggestions outside a normal inspection's realm that could affect pest control success, to simply staying in touch with the occasional text when necessary.

"I had a client contact the office and say, 'I know he's not scheduled to be here until November, but I'm having an issue.' And so it's nice to call them right away and let them know I'll be there in a few days," Kuligoski said. "It's important to be thorough, but also quick in response. Provide the same service you would want, with a fast response and updates, let them know 'I found this,' or 'I did that.' Even a text works."

Most clients don't even call the office — they call or text Kuligoski directly about everything. "There have been times when I might be off on a Monday and the sugar factory client will call and ask if I'm OK because I'm usually there at 8 a.m. And I remind [the client] it's my day off this week. I've been seeing people for 15 to 18 years, and you talk about their kids, your kids, sports, vacations. Having real personal relationships — I think that's important. So even if there's a price increase in our business, we have a bond and they're thinking, 'We're not going to get rid of Tom.'"

STAYING EDUCATED.

Kuligoski is a proponent of ongoing monthly training. "There are new things to learn, there are important new invasive species or new equipment, or you're using new pesticides and new labels that are changing and starting in two months you can't use them," he said.

Kuligoski said he thinks that with some pest control companies, you can tell who does continuing education and who doesn't. "I've been to places where they are treating things they shouldn't, so education is always ongoing," he said.

Kuligoski's advice for new technicians is to "be willing to learn, solve problems, take it a day at a time. Hang in there; you will bear fruit the longer you stay with it. But you have to be dedicated to it and when you have a route like this, you are your own boss. It's not a hard job, but you have to be disciplined. Every morning, you offer solutions and see the results, so it's a great feeling." ★

The author is a Chicago-area-based contributing writer.



Innovative solutions like Termidor HE High-Efficiency termiticide are making termite work less labor- and time-intensive.

Helping You Achieve

Whether it's innovative product offerings or unwavering support, BASF provides the tools and support PMPs need to excel.

Successful pest management professionals (PMPs) have been able to recognize a market demand, develop a business plan, put policies and procedures in place and — perhaps most importantly — surround themselves with a winning team. A crucial part of that team is innovative manufacturers like BASF, which offer a full suite of solutions and innovations, as well as resources, training and field support.

PMPs that have partnered with BASF have been able to take their businesses to new heights.

"We look forward to growing our relationship with BASF and finding out what new products and technology they will be introducing," said Rob Tillery, general manager, Golden Circle Exterminators, Jackson, Tenn. "We trust them to help take the company where we want to go."



Rob Tillery

Another progressive company reaping the benefits of BASF is Turner Pest Control, Jacksonville, Fla. "In the pest control industry, there are a lot of companies that continue to do things the way they've always done them, but Turner is always open to finding better, faster ways of doing things, so they've been an excellent fit for BASF," said Corey Meudt, sales representative, BASF Professional Pest Management, St. Augustine, Fla.

TERMITE SOLUTIONS.

Termite control remains a core segment for the majority of U.S. pest control companies. Although this line of work is profitable, it is labor-intensive and requires a deep understanding of termite biology and behavior, home construction, as well as termite control products and technology.

For a company like Turner Pest Control, which operates in the heavy termite-pressure Florida market, having multiple termite control options is imperative.



One convenient solution for two inconvenient pests

Rest easy knowing you've got an all-in-one tool for effective flea and bed bug treatments. With three proven active ingredients, including Reduced Risk dinotefuran*, the primary active, and prallethrin for fast knockdown, **PT® Alpine®** flea & bed bug pressurized insecticide offers long-term protection against flea populations and kills hatching eggs for up to seven months. It also kills bed bugs and aids in preventing bed bugs from hatching. Quick and efficient, **PT Alpine** flea & bed bug pressurized insecticide is specially formulated to avoid soaking carpets and mattresses, making it an ideal choice for flea and bed bug cleanouts.

For more information, visit **pestcontrol.basf.us** or contact your BASF representative.

*Dinotefuran, the primary active ingredient in Alpine insecticides, has been granted Reduced Risk status for public health use by the EPA.

Always read and follow label directions.

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The Alpine® line of products are helping PMPs find solutions in challenging accounts like commercial kitchens.

BASF, whose termite control solutions include liquid termiticides and bait solutions, has been a great partner for Turner.

As BASF's Meudt noted, "For Turner to grow to the size they wanted to be, they needed ways to do efficacious treatments faster and treatments that were better overall for the homeowner."

During his tenure at BASF, Meudt has worked closely with several Turner Pest Control branch managers, sharing with them the various BASF termite product offerings, including Termidor® HE High-Efficiency Termiticide; Termidor® HP II using the Termidor HP High Precision Injection System; and Trelona® ATBS Annual Bait Stations.

Termidor HE's molecular technology allows for half the water, 50 percent shallower treatment depths, 33 percent fewer drill holes and 77 percent smaller trenches.

The Termidor HP High Precision Injection System, which uses Termidor HP II, allows companies to do termite treatments with potentially no drilling for sub slab injections.

Trelona ATBS Annual Termite Bait Stations feature the Trelona Compressed Termite Bait with the active ingredient novaluron. With its larger station size and unique vertical slots, the stations are specially designed to allow easy access, as the soil directly contacts the cartridge that contains the bait matrix. PMPs have ownership and the flexibility to check stations just once a year, or more frequently if they prefer. This can save labor costs with fewer visits to inspect stations each year.

Meudt said Turner has embraced the entire BASF portfolio because it ensures they always have the right product for the treatment.

"If they go to a house and there's a lot of concrete — if there is a parking pad on the side of the house, or a super wide driveway or a big pool deck on the back, then automatically that house is either going to be Trelona or Termidor HP II because those two products don't require drilling," Meudt said. "If they treat a house where there is not a lot of concrete, but instead easy access to soil (and thus less drilling), that house is either going to be Termidor HE or Trelona, depending on if they want bait or liquid."

Another way Meudt has been able to assist companies like Turner is by supporting sales and marketing efforts. BASF supplies Turner with marketing materials and Meudt has followed up with visits "to facilitate sales training to help them be able to talk about the products and the services that Turner can provide."

ADDRESSING THE LABOR CHALLENGE.

Another company benefiting from the use of BASF innovation is Golden Circle Exterminators, Jackson, Tenn.

Golden Circle's Tillery has seen the evolution of Termidor first-hand. Tillery was a proponent of using Termidor® SC Termiticide/Insecticide, and at the urging of his sales representative, Nick Iverson (BASF Professional Pest Management, Knoxville, Tenn.), Golden Circle switched to Termidor HE when this product came to market.

Tillery said Golden Circle has not experienced any failures with Termidor HE. "It kills termites every time," he said. "People keep talking to me about using other products and other systems, but we're totally committed to doing the best thing for our customer. And you can't do much better than 100 percent effective."

As a former termite technician, Tillery remembered how labor-intensive it was to dig six-inch trenches. "When Nick [Iverson] talked about digging two-inch trenches and treating at two gallons per 10 linear feet, I was all in. It meant we can do more jobs every day," Tillery recalled. "Right now, it saves us an entire termite truck and crew just by allowing more to be done in a day."

Tillery added that service technicians benefit too. "We are production-based on our pay, so our guys make a lot more money, which means everybody's happy."

And being able to do more jobs with fewer technicians has proven invaluable during the recent labor shortage. Iverson said, "If [companies] are down two or three termite technicians, BASF has the innovative products to still be able to keep up with the volume of jobs that they need."

A TRUE PARTNERSHIP.

While BASF representatives support pest management professionals by bringing them new products and technology, PMPs also provide BASF with invaluable feedback. For example, not long after BASF had introduced Alpine WSG Water Granule Soluble Insecticide, BASF's Iverson provided Golden Circle with a sample.

As Iverson recalled, "In the beginning, Alpine WSG wasn't really taking off, but Rob [Tillery] was one of the first people to tell me 'This stuff is dynamite on German cockroaches.'"

In particular, Golden Circle used Alpine WSG at a high-pressure German cockroach account — a Chinese restaurant that had permanently closed in the middle of the night, vacating the premises and leaving all of the food behind.

"I've been doing this for close to 40 years, and I don't think I've ever seen a roach situation worse than that, and it literally cleaned it all up in one treatment. We went back for a two-week follow up and found one live cockroach nearby. And there were thousands and thousands of roaches. So, I knew that we were on to something with Alpine WSG."

Another example of BASF bringing beneficial technology to Golden Circle was the launch of Selontra® Rodent Bait. Featuring the active ingredient cholecalciferol, rodents eat only enough for a lethal dose, leaving more for the rest of the colony.

"It works different than other rodenticides," Iverson said. "Golden Circle was having rodent issues at a soft drink bottling plant, and I remember Rob saying he would give [Selontra] a try. And man, it worked. It did what it was supposed to do."

This and other successes persuaded Golden Circle to include Selontra among the bait products it rotates at accounts.

ALWAYS INNOVATING.

BASF has been built on a foundation of innovation. BASF sales and technical representatives work hand in hand with pest management professionals to understand their needs, which in turn drives innovation. As the pest control industry continues to evolve, count on BASF to continue to provide PCOs with the cutting-edge solutions they depend on to take their businesses to the next level. ★

SOLUTIONS WITH THE TECHNICIAN IN MIND

BASF understands the critical role service technicians play in the success of pest control businesses. It's why BASF always has service technicians top of mind when developing new products and technology. Termidor HE High-Efficiency termiticide is one such solution that has made life better for service technicians.

With Termidor HE, service technicians are digging two-inch trenches instead of six-inch trenches and they are applying two gallons of termiticide instead of four. Yes, PCOs reap those labor-savings benefits, "but more importantly, for the technician, it means less actual physical labor on the job site to get the job done," said Corey Meudt, sales representative, BASF Professional Pest Management, St. Augustine, Fla.


Corey Meudt

Another BASF termite product that has made life better for technicians is the Trelona® ATBS Annual Bait Stations, which eliminates termite activity and has a flexible inspection label.

Nick Iverson, sales representative, BASF Professional Pest Management, Knoxville, Tenn., said that when using Trelona, the technician decides how many inspections will be conducted and when, as long as one is conducted annually per the label. Also, Termidor HE has made liquid termiticide applications less labor-intensive for PMPs.


Nick Iverson

"I always like to say that a happy technician is a more productive technician that will probably stay with you longer," Iverson said. "Both of these products cut the physical work in half versus older technology, so why wouldn't you take a look at it."

TECHNICIAN of the YEAR AWARDS *Finalists*

The following service professionals were named as finalists in this year's Technician of the Year Awards program.

COMMERCIAL

- Eric Biester, Northwest Exterminating, Marietta, Ga.
- Miguel Guillen, Orkin Pest Control, Los Angeles, Calif.
- Anthony Hubbard, ABC Home & Commercial Services, Austin, Texas
- Derrick McKown, Massey Services, Plano, Texas
- Doug Seeman, Adam's Pest Control, Medina, Minn.
- Rex Schmidt, Orkin Pest Control, Omaha, Neb.
- Ben Weber, United Pest Solutions, Kenmore, Wash.

RESIDENTIAL

- Gene Boatman, PCI Pest Control, Olympia, Wash.
- Jerry Brown, Massey Services, Euless, Texas
- Wilson Christner, Whitmore Pest and Wildlife, Sedalia, Colo.
- Chad Gilbert, Northwest Exterminating, Marietta, Ga.
- Anthony Hammes, Orkin Pest Control, Springfield, Ill.
- John Howie, ChemFree Pest and Lawn. Austin, Texas
- Clarence Wendler, Orkin Pest Control, Eau Claire, Wis.

TERMITE

- Burton Funchess, Brock Lawn and Pest Control, Lynn Haven, Fla.
- Daniel Peck, Preventive Pest Control, Albuquerque, N.M.
- Justin Reynolds, Lake Norman Pest Control, Mooresville, N.C.
- Alex Vega, Northwest Exterminating, Marietta, Ga.

JUDGES

The process for choosing this year's winners involved a thorough review of each candidate's credentials, including materials submitted by their respective companies. A panel of well-respected industry professionals had the difficult task of deciding the winners. PCT would like to thank our panel of judges:



Dr. Robert Corrigan, RMC Pest Management Consulting, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.



Dr. Robert Davis, BASF Professional & Specialty Solutions, Blanco, Texas



Dr. Richard Kramer, Industry Consultant, Brookeville, Md.



Dr. Fred Whitford, Purdue University Pesticide Programs, West Lafayette, Ind.

ONLINE EXTRAS

More About PCT's Technician of the Year Awards

Visit the "online extras" section on pctonline.com for additional information about this year's finalists and a listing of past PCT Technicians of the Year.



Outsmart rats and mice with **Selontra**® rodent bait.

Rats and mice are notoriously cunning at evading most treatments, which is why you need a solution that's smarter than them in every way: **Selontra** rodent bait. Its cholecalciferol-based formula with 99% food-grade ingredients delivers a taste rodents can't resist and even controls those resistant to traditional anticoagulants.[1]

Contact your local BASF sales specialist for more information.

1. Edward F. Marshall. Cholecalciferol: A Unique Toxicant for Rodent Control. DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Proceedings of the Eleventh Vertebrate Pest Conference. 1984.

Always read and follow label directions.

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BED BUG *Supplement*

From how a vintage trend might affect bed bug transmission, to how a thorough understanding of them can help your efforts, read on for insights you can use now.



INSIDE: Get Thrifty • Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite • News & Notes



GET THRIFTY

By Chelle Hartzer

Vintage is so in right now. Here's what your customers bringing home (potentially bed bug-infested) thrifted furniture means for you.

There are so many ways to get a good deal, such as using coupons and trading or buying second-hand goods. Data from last year showed that the resale home furnishings market was expected to hit $16 billion in 2022, which was up from $12 billion in 2019, according to Architectural Digest. Thrift stores, resale stores, rental companies, websites and community networks are all available for people to shop for those "gently used" items instead of paying full price.

Finding that great deal is an endorphin rush until unexpected guests are brought home with it.

It's not news that bed bugs are hitchhikers. They will get into cracks and crevices of suitcases, furniture, housekeeping carts and more. They can't fly, but they do travel quite well when conditions present themselves. With the increased interest in buying used goods, customers are going to be bringing back bed bugs more frequently. Therefore, professionals will be getting more calls.



© ALLISON CHERRY | ISTOCK

Your customers' great deal on second-hand furniture might bring new challenges to the work you do in their home.



I was dealing with a recurring bed bug issue at a home recently. We knew it was most likely a re-introduction but couldn't pinpoint a source. The residents were not traveling and hadn't visited any family or other locales that could have had bed bugs. Finally, we inspected the garage. Turns out, the resident hunted for old furniture to rehab and resell. There were numerous couches, chairs and other soft furniture. After treating the living areas of the house, the customer was going out and spending time in the garage with the infested furniture and bringing the bed bugs back inside.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. Whether people buy items at garage sales, flea markets or take them off the side of the street, bed bugs are a freebie. Bed bugs aren't new, and most people know about the risks. That does not mean they know what to look for. A 2017 study of travelers by University of Kentucky researchers showed the general public has a one in five chance of correctly identifying a line drawing of a bed bug. If most people don't know what to look for, they definitely aren't going to find it. If you have customers who are frequent second-hand shoppers, giving them good visual materials to help them is a great idea.

Also, let them know where they should look. A cursory glance over that dark-colored vintage armchair won't show bed bugs. I hear so often from customers that "if it had bed bugs, I would have noticed it." It *did*, and they *didn't*. At low infestation levels, it can be hard for even a professional to find bed bugs. Then there are the bites, or lack of bites. Around 30 percent of the population has no reaction to bed bug bites, and elderly people commonly react less to bites. This allows bed bugs to go undetected and reproduce until infestations are high. Along with literature on what bed bugs look like, it's a good idea to explain where to look. Getting into those little crevices and folds is one of the best ways to discover bed bugs if they are there.

BUYER BEWARE. "But they said it was from a bed bug-free home!" On sites like Nextdoor, Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist and more, it's common to see that phrase. As we've just found out, people don't know, will trust the sellers and not inspect themselves. For those customers collecting used goods, you may want to recommend they leave it outside or establish a small "quarantine" area to monitor for a week or six. Even buying something from an antique or thrift store (instead of some random stranger) is still risky. Cleaning and vacuuming will help reduce the risk, but it won't eliminate it completely. When bed bug issues start up, asking if the customer has brought any new items in can help to narrow inspections. Remind them that "new" also includes used; it's just new to that customer.

> **With the increased interest in buying used goods, customers are going to be bringing back bed bugs more frequently. Therefore, pest management professionals can likely expect more calls.**

APARTMENT COMPLEX. Multifamily housing and dorm buildings are a big problem when it comes to bed bug transfers. A resident moving out may dump what looks like perfectly good furniture or mattresses by the trash. Other residents looking to save some money see a free option. In college towns, a sofa may go through a dozen residents before finally being unwanted. Assisted living and nursing facilities also fall into this category. Family members may be looking for a quick, low-cost option or may be moving their infested goods from their home to grandma's new room.

Rental companies have also been implicated in spreading bed bugs. That reclining chair could have been used by many people before it gets to your customer's home. As it travels back and forth from store to home to store again, bed bugs could be hitching a ride. We know those delivery trucks don't get cleaned out and the insects could disperse that way.

SERVICE MERCHANDISE. As I was researching for this article, I had no idea how many online retailers there were for second-hand furniture and home goods. If someone is looking for that perfect

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vintage 1920s daybed in just the right colors, chances are it can be found online. My dad likes to say he will never get bed bugs because he stays in high-end hotels. Just because a customer buys furniture from a high-end store, doesn't eliminate the risk of bed bugs. People visiting estate sales, antique stores and online sites can bring bed bugs into their homes. Just because it costs more, doesn't mean it can't have infestations.

For those customers who just can't resist that "like-new" king-size mattress, there are some options. For the frequent thrifters, consider selling them a heat chamber. These come in many sizes to treat anything from a small suitcase to a large sofa. If the item is small enough, it can go in a freezer. Freezing bed bugs takes longer than heat treatment; they will need to freeze for at least a few days.

If you are servicing antique or thrift stores, retrain your customers on what bed bugs look like and where they are found. There are treatments for bed bugs, but you will likely be doing more crack and crevice treatments along walls. The furniture itself won't be treated and will move in and out with some regularity. Normally, using an insect growth regulator would be a good preventative, residual treatment. Unfortunately, IGRs have no effect on developing bed bugs.

We know many people will try the DIY route before calling in the pros. They may have sprayed down the new armoire with whatever product they could get off the shelf. Many of these can be repellent and will interfere with any professional liquid treatment. Make sure to ask if the customer has already tried other products before they called you. Also, ensure they understand to not use any of their own store-bought products after you have treated. When using any type of residual treatment, customers shouldn't clean either. If you apply a residual to that armoire and the customer decides to strip it and remove the finish, they have now removed any residual.

To sum up, people don't know what bed bugs look like, they don't know where to look for them and they may not be feeling bites. And they think they are immune from getting bed bugs in the first place.

There is a lot to be said for buying secondhand. It is more environmentally friendly since new goods don't have to be constructed and landfills are used less. Estate sales, garage sales, flea markets, thrift stores, antique stores, online stores and marketplaces are getting more attention from price-conscious people. With more used furniture and home goods getting passed around, bed bugs are going with them. Low cost sounds good until you add in the treatment fees for bed bug control. **PCT**

The author is a technical contributing editor for PCT magazine and the founder of 360 Pest & Food Safety Consulting.





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Don't Let the BED BUGS BITE



A thorough understanding of bed bug biology and behavior is the first step in stopping these menacing pests.

By Daniel D. Dye

Historical records show that bed bugs have been around for thousands of years and can be traced back to around 400 B.C. In America, it's believed they arrived from ships carrying European settlers. They can be traced back to early European colony writings, indicating bed bugs were in high numbers from about the mid 1700s.

The phrase "sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" harkens back to a time when wooden beds had ropes attached across the frame in a net style configuration to support a sleeping person.

In the United States, bed bugs were very common until a few years after World War II. The use of pesticides, such as DDT, greatly reduced infestations. By the late 1960s, bed bug infestations were almost unheard of. In fact, many pest professionals, including myself, never witnessed a bed bug infestation until a decade or so ago.

APPEARANCE. Bed bug adults are about 5 millimeters long (slightly less than ¼-inch), they are flat, oval-shaped and brownish-red in color and look somewhat like an apple seed with legs. These little suckers have a piercing-sucking mouthpart that injects fluid into the wound to prevent coagulation and numbs the area to prevent the person from feeling the bite. The fluid from the bite may cause a reaction in some people in the form of itching and the area could become swollen and red. Scratching the area may cause sores and become infected. Under ideal conditions, a bed bug's life cycle takes

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Aprehend® in the news

Two giants of journalism—TIME magazine and BBC—recently published in-depth bed bug articles. Aprehend was cited as an effective tool in both articles.

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about five weeks from egg to adult. The female will lay her sticky eggs to any surface; usually in crevices where they hide in loose groups or clusters. She will lay one to five eggs at a time and between 200 to 500 eggs in her lifetime.

In the United States, we have two species of bed bugs infesting homes and feeding on human hosts, the common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*), which is seen most often and the rarely observed tropical bed bug (*Cimex hemipterus*).

Bat bugs (*Cimex adjunctus*) and chimney swift bugs (*Cimexopsis nyctalis*) have occasionally been found in structures. If random bugs resembling bed bugs are seen in areas of a structure away from the typical areas you would find bed bugs, further investigation should be performed and a positive identification should be made before any treatment strategy is recommended.

Bed bugs have claws instead of pads. These claws help them to climb over areas such as bedding and other rough surfaces. They have a difficult time climbing very smooth surfaces. When not feeding, they will climb to suitable hiding areas such as cracks and crevices in headboards and mattress seams. Bed bugs normally hide during the day and feed at night when the host is not aware. If the host sleeps during the day, they will feed during that time. Bed bugs are attracted to the carbon dioxide and heat produced by the host.



Daniel Dye

THE INSPECTION. The most important thing when it comes to controlling any insect is the inspection. You must take your time and do a thorough inspection. Just because the host may spend most nights sleeping in the bedroom, which is where you found the bed bugs, doesn't mean the rest of the structure is bed bug-free. What if the host falls asleep on the couch watching movies? Would bed bugs eventually make their way to that area? Of course they will. You can see quickly why a thorough inspection of the entire interior is important.



A bed bug's life cycle takes about five weeks from egg to adult.

So, where should one look for bed bugs? Here's list of places to look. You may have other places in mind that are not on the list:

- The buttons and seams of mattresses
- Box springs
- Bed frames
- Folds and creases in bed linens
- Drapery pleats and hems
- Curtain rods
- Beneath loose wallpaper
- Crown molding
- In headboards
- Desks
- Entertainment centers (do not treat inside electronics)
- Nightstands
- Wall-mounted artwork
- Stuffed furniture
- Baseboards
- Cracks of hardwood floors
- Light switches
- Wall outlets
- Door and window frames
- The edge of popcorn ceilings
- Smoke detectors

You may find blood droppings or even skin casts while inspecting those areas listed. You may even notice a sweet, foul odor while performing your inspection. This is caused by an oily liquid they emit.

CUSTOMER PREPARATION. There's an ongoing discussion in the pest management community on whether the customer should prepare for treatment or not. To prep or not to prep, that is the question. Certainly, some preparation needs to be done, but how much is debatable. Some technicians may want the customer to completely prepare each room and have it ready for treatment. Some may not want any preparation performed at all. There are pros and cons with both techniques. A lot depends on the control products being used. Many companies have bed bug preparation sheets to give to the customer. But, as you know, the customer rarely follows it.

TREATMENT STRATEGY. Let's talk a little about treatment strategies. How

COURTESY OF DANIEL DYE

many trips will it take to gain control? The initial treatment should be extremely thorough to kill as many bed bugs as possible. Using a HEPA vacuum designed for the pest control industry will go a long way by reducing the population quickly. Vacuuming and performing a thorough application using your favorite bed bug-labeled control product will help give the customer some immediate relief. If your treatment was a conventional liquid or dust treatment, you should schedule your next inspection in two weeks. This gives your treatment enough time to do its job. If you perform your inspection the following week after your initial treatment, you will still find activity, which will most likely cause you to unnecessarily treat again. Wait the full two weeks. If you performed a thorough initial treatment, you will find low activity or none at all. Treat if necessary. Your final inspection should take place two weeks after your second inspection. Treat if needed.

Sealing mattresses and box springs with encasements designed to trap bed bugs is another great idea. Not only will it trap any bed bugs that did not die from the treatment, it makes inspection much easier and more thorough.

You might be a PMP who performs heat treatments or tent fumigations. Whichever one you do, you should do a follow up conventional treatment with your favorite bed bug-labeled liquid or dust product. Remember, the customer has taken some of the stuff out of that structure. Don't rely on just the heat treatment or the fumigation. You may have completely controlled all the bed bugs, but there's nothing to stop a re-infestation brought in from the items they took with them while your treatment was being performed.

Don't forget, a little education given to your customer will go a long way in earning trust in you as their pest management professional. You should explain to them how to keep a re-infestation from occurring again.

REINFESTATION PREVENTION. Let them know that bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers and are often spread from place to place by crawling into everyday items they may travel with such as backpacks, duffel bags, briefcases and handbags. Some of the most common ways bed bug infestations may be introduced include:

- Spending time in an environment which is infested with bed bugs.
- Having a guest visit who has come from such an environment.
- Introducing items that are infested with bed bugs into the structure.

So, what can they do to reduce the chance of picking up hitchhiking bed bugs? Do not place handbags, backpacks, etc., on the floor, since bed bugs are capable of crawling across the floor and into items where they hide in tight dark places. By placing their items on shelves, counter tops, etc., they can reduce the chance of bed bugs traveling back home with them. If they suspect there are bed bugs, they can enclose their personal belongings in a trash bag to prevent bed bugs from crawling on and inside them.

Inspect the outside of the trash bag before placing it inside their car to travel home. Advise the customer that they should thoroughly inspect the clothing and shoes they are wearing to make sure bed bugs have not crawled onto them while they are in an area they suspect may have bed bugs.

Once they've arrived home, they should not open and unpack items in the bedroom or in an area that is carpeted. They should open these items in an area where they can easily see and contain any bed bugs that may have hitchhiked on them. Some examples are:

- Garage or carport
- Outside
- Bathtub
- Laundry room

If they suspect that bed bugs are in their backpack, handbag, duffel bag, etc., they may place them in the dryer on high heat for at least 30 minutes.

FINAL THOUGHTS. Controlling bed bugs can be difficult at times. The more you know about their biology and habits, the better equipped you will be when it comes to tackling an infestation. Know your enemy. Think like a bed bug! **PCT**

The author is an Associate Certified Entomologist Emeritus with 41 years of pest management experience.





Bed bugs are in the news again.
Here's everything you need to know.

BED BUG NEWS & NOTES

N.C. State Study: Common Veterinary Drugs Show Effectiveness Against Bed Bugs

Two common drugs used by veterinarians to combat parasites may be effective against bed bugs, with one showing especially strong potential, according to a new study from North Carolina State University that examined the drugs in the context of controlling resurgent bed bug populations on poultry farms.



Two common drugs used by veterinarians to combat parasites may be effective against bed bugs, with one showing especially strong potential, according to a new study from North Carolina State University that examined the drugs in the context of controlling resurgent bed bug populations on poultry farms.

Fluralaner and ivermectin, which are used to kill fleas and ticks on household pets like dogs and cats, among other uses, were tested for their effectiveness in killing bed bugs. In a collaboration between entomologists and veterinary scientists from NC State's College of Veterinary Medicine, researchers tested bed bug mortality rates in different experiments: after the pests consumed blood mixed with the drugs on the lab bench and after bed bugs bit and fed off chickens that had either ingested or received topical treatment with the drugs.

Fluralaner is a relatively new, longer-lasting anti-parasitic drug used mostly

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for companion animals; however, Europe and Australia have approved its use for the poultry industry. Besides household pet uses, ivermectin effectively serves anti-parasitic uses in human populations, particularly in Africa, as well as in larger animals.

Both drugs showed powerful efficacy on the lab bench, killing most bed bugs, although fluralaner performed much more effectively on bed bugs that showed resistance to common insecticides.

"The drugs affect receptors in the insect's nervous system," said Coby Schal, Blanton J. Whitmire Distinguished Professor of Entomology at NC State and the corresponding author of a paper describing the work.

Fluralaner was highly effective at killing bed bugs that fed on chickens dosed with the drug.

Ivermectin, meanwhile, was ineffective against bed bugs that fed on dosed chickens.

"We used the recommended dosage of ivermectin, either in a topical form or ingested, but neither was able to kill bed bugs," said Maria González-Morales, a former Ph.D. student at NC State and the first author of the paper.

The researchers said chickens could be quickly metabolizing or clearing ivermectin from their systems.

"The bed bug is a globally important insect," Schal said. "The last few decades have seen a resurgence of bed bugs in homes, and now we're seeing bed bugs return to poultry farms. Since there is no proven method to stop bed bugs in commercial farms, the potential problems on poultry farms could be massive. We're trying to get ahead of it by developing technologies that can eliminate bed bugs."

"The health effects to poultry from bed bug infestation are not well documented, but anecdotally poultry farmers see animal welfare concerns like stress and anemia, which could negatively affect meat or egg production," González-Morales said.

"There are also concerns for workers on these farms considering how easily bed bugs can spread from poultry to people," Schal added.

The researchers say that dosing fluralaner in poultry drinking water could serve as an effective measure against bed bugs.

A combination of monitoring, education, heat treatments and fluralaner could hold the key to eradicating bed bugs from infested poultry farms, they add.

The study appears in *Parasites & Vectors*. Andrea E. Thomson, Olivia A. Petritz, Rocio Crespo, Ahmed Haija, Richard G. Santangelo co-authored the paper.

Funding was provided by the Blanton J. Whitmire Endowment at NC State, and grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Healthy Homes program (NCHHU0053-19) and the National Science Foundation (DEB-

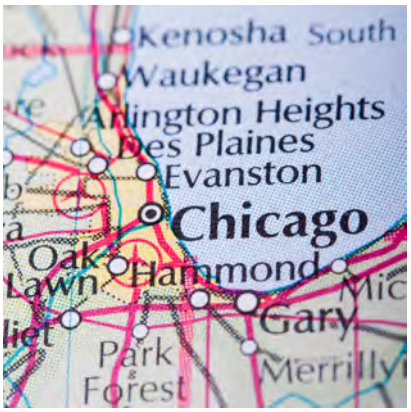


1754190). — *Source: North Carolina State University*

Chicago Tops Orkin's 2023 Top 50 Bed Bug Cities List

The Windy City is settling in as the No. 1 city on Orkin's Top 50 Bed Bug Cities List for the third year in a row. Chicago, New York and Philadelphia hold onto the top three spots, ranking first, second and third, respectively. Los Angeles saw the largest jump this year, moving up seven spots into the top five, with Cleveland (No. 4) and Raleigh (No. 20) each moving up the list by four spots. Visit bit.ly/40Hu8V3 for a complete list of the Top 50 Bed Bug Cities.

With "National Shop for Travel Day" taking place Jan. 9, 2024, travelers are reminded to start planning for vacation, including exploring travel accommodations. As Americans begin to book hotels for 2024 and beyond, it is critical for travelers to know how to identify and thoroughly check for bed bugs within hotel rooms (and beyond) while taking care not to bring the pests into their own homes.



The list is based on treatment data from metro areas where Orkin performed the most bed bug treatments from Dec. 1, 2021-Nov. 30, 2022. It includes both residential and commercial treatments.

1. Chicago
2. New York (+1)
3. Philadelphia (-1)
4. Cleveland-Akron, OH (+4)
5. Los Angeles (+7)
6. Detroit (-2)
7. Indianapolis (-1)
8. Baltimore (-3)
9. Washington, D.C. (-2)
10. Columbus, OH (-1)

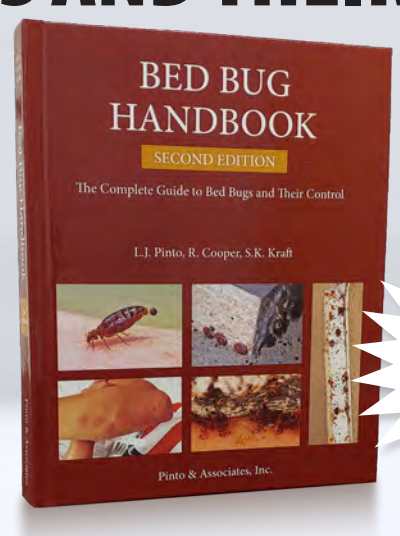
"Bed bugs are extremely resilient, making them difficult to control. As people begin to ramp up their travel plans this year, it's important they know how to protect themselves through pest identification and proper control," said Ben Hottel, Orkin entomologist. "Contrary to popular belief, bed bugs are visible to the naked eye, but are excellent at hiding. Involving a trained professional at the sight of a bed bug introduction is recommended." **PCT**

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Becoming a Technical Leader: A Path Worth Pursuing

Embarking on the journey to becoming a technical leader in the pest management industry is a challenging but incredibly rewarding endeavor. It's a path that requires a deep understanding of the field and a commitment to ongoing learning and growth. It is very much a never-ending snowball effect — you just keep adding and adapting your knowledge and skills.

As technical director for a pest management company, I want to shed light on what it takes to encourage both individuals and companies to foster a technical mindset.

MUCH TO LEARN. The pest management industry is a complex and diverse one, where on day one, newcomers are confronted with a multitude of topics to begin mastering. It is often overwhelming and frustrating to have what is perceived as too much to take in.

Day one topics range from fundamental skills like the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), safe driving practices, effective communication, maintaining a professional image, federal, state and local regulations and harnessing digital technologies that have become increasingly essential in our industry. And this is just the beginning; we've yet to touch on other core topics like pest identification and behaviors, and understanding product applications, formulations and modes of actions. Wow. We wonder why we find people in our industry not following protocols or procedures that they were trained to follow.

Any great athlete or high-performing person or company will focus on the basics — repetition, repetition, repetition. Once the basics are mastered, then we move on to more advanced topics.

Pest management importance is often highlighted in times of crisis, primarily focusing on safeguarding public health, as we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to see with vector-borne disease outbreaks. But in today's world, there is an increasing demand from clients at all levels for pest management companies and technicians to have a deeper knowledge of pests and the products they are responsible for applying around their homes, families and businesses.

Instilling this knowledge requires a significant commitment from both the pest management company holding individuals accountable to grow a technical mindset and the technician themselves. On an individual level, some of the most valuable knowledge is self-acquired, stemming from a personal initiative to learn and grow.

There are a lot of creative training techniques that need to be explored. Within any company, there will be individuals that receive training better than others simply based on the format in which the information is presented. During a discussion with a friend in the industry about training techniques for our teams, the term "death by PowerPoint" came up. Having used PowerPoint extensively in the past, I reflected on my approach to conveying messages or ideas to our team. I realized that when I was tasked with creating a training program, I was forced to thoroughly dissect the information I wanted to convey and understand it inside out. This process led to the development of an effective training exercise.

FLIP THE SCRIPT. In this exercise, instead of me presenting, everyone else in the room becomes a potential presenter to their peers. Here's how it works: Topics that cover pests, products, our company culture, communications, etc., are randomly assigned to each person in the group, and team members are given the challenge of preparing a 10-minute presentation on their given topic. For a lot of people, the fear of speaking publicly is ranked somewhere around the fear of death. I'm not trying to cause fear or panic in the exercise, so I remind the group that these topics come up in conversations we have with our clients every day, and if you're uncomfortable, knowledge of the topic eases any anxiety you may experience. This is a powerful motivator, pushing team members to delve deeper into the topic assigned. The result is a level of learning that far exceeds what a simple lecture would achieve.

On a side note, many team members responded that they now have a new level of understanding of what it takes to put together a training session and are more appreciative of presenters. Hopefully, this will lead to more engagement in training sessions in the future.

GROWING INTO LEADERSHIP. Assigning the responsibility of presenting a technical topic, as I said previously, can be uncomfortable for many, but for a select few, it ignites a passion for technical excellence that can ultimately grow into technical leadership. Putting yourself in uncomfortable situations will cause you to grow.

I read a quote a couple of years ago that I've repeated several times since: "If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room." If your company does not have a structured and ongoing training program that starts from day one and continues throughout an individual's career, keeping up with the rapidly evolving trends in our industry will be a struggle.

What the future of the pest management industry will look like is uncertain, but one thing is for sure — this is an exciting time to be a part of something great. We are gaining relevance and importance in the eyes of the public — not just in times of public health crisis — which will require more of our industry and the individuals in it than ever before.

The question is, will we rise up and embrace a more technically based future or be left behind by others that do? **PCT**

Christian Wilcox is technical director for McCauley Services. He is a member of the National Pest Management Association Technical Committee and the Urban Pest Management Technical Committee (www.upmtc.org). Contact him at christianw@callmccauley.com.



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- have a plan for servicing accounts that do not allow the application of RUPs?

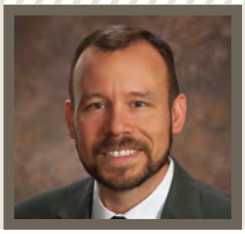


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Preparing Your Marketing Program for a New Year

As we celebrate the most wonderful time of the year with our loved ones, it can be easy to blink and find ourselves back at work on Jan. 2. If you're feeling overwhelmed thinking about getting your business organized for the year ahead, you're not alone. To keep yourself, and your business, on track, make sure to set aside time early in the new year to create a marketing plan.

Spending time developing your marketing program in advance is a great way to determine your goals and objectives for the year while allowing you to examine every opportunity to maximize your success and prepare for potential obstacles. According to SmallBizTrends, three in four small business owners who are struggling or failing say not being organized has affected the productivity level of their companies. Planning out the year ahead will help your business flourish and remain organized, so you never find yourself in the position where you're unsure of what to do every month.

DIVING INTO CORE PROGRAMS. One way to keep yourself organized and from falling into a creative rut is by developing an editorial calendar that includes ideas for your media relations and digital programs. While these two categories might not cover everything you'll need for your business to reach its goals, they're both essential and can get you on the right path.

MEDIA RELATIONS. Working with your local media can be a great way to boost credibility and build awareness for your business. While it might seem like traditional consumption of media is declining, TVTech reported 48 percent of Americans overwhelmingly cited television as the most important source for local news, and more than half reported watching local news on television daily.

When thinking about your media relations calendar, consider what you would want your customers to know about at specific times of the year. For example, ahead of summer, it is important they know about the threats of stinging insects and ticks.

Make sure to plan your outreach to local journalists in advance so you can start conversations with them before your competitors do. Not only will this increase the likelihood of your business being featured in a segment, but it's a great way to make connections with local journalists who are more likely to come back to you for another segment down the line.

DIGITAL PROGRAMS. We are living in a world where technology is constantly changing, making it even more important to have a strategy in place for your business' digital properties. Having a set plan will make it easier to flex and adjust programming versus starting from scratch where, without previous experience, you might find it difficult to get a successful digital strategy off the ground.

Social media is one important part of a digital program that will require flexibility, as it is constantly changing and updating to improve user experience. While some businesses might not see the value in social media, as their current target audience might not be active on social platforms, it is something to consider if looking to expand reach.

Social media is primarily geared towards a younger demographic, and being active on social media will set your business up for years ahead. According to Forbes, 84 percent of people aged 18 to 29 use at least one social media site. While it may seem wasteful to dedicate time to social media efforts, it gives your business the opportunity to build brand awareness amongst the demographic that will eventually have concerns about pest control.

In addition to organic social media content, businesses can put a budget behind their posts for advertising. This could help with specific business needs, such as reaching a very targeted audience and improving engagement, or the general need to increase your brand's visibility overall.

The other element of a successful digital program is having a strong website for your business. Your website gives you the opportunity to educate customers about who you are and what you have to offer them. Additionally, you can use your website to share important information, such as pest prevention tips, and facts about pests.

To compete with other businesses, consider implementing a search engine optimization (SEO) plan to ensure content on your site is being pushed to the top of search engines to be seen by potential customers. According to On The Map Internet Marketing, Google's No. 1 organic search result has an average click-through rate (CTR) of 31.7 percent, and this result is 10 times more likely to get a click compared to the 10th result.

Your business can work with an agency if it needs SEO support, but businesses with tighter budgets can also do it on their own.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR 2024. Next year is going to be busy, with both the Olympics and the presidential election. This is important to keep in mind when creating your marketing program, as your business will be competing for screen time on local and national news and will potentially run into more expensive social advertising costs. Keep both events in mind when planning your goals and strategy for the summer and fall months.

No matter what your goals and strategies are for 2024, one of the most important things to consider is creating a flexible marketing plan. Even without the Olympics and presidential election, bumps in the road can happen, and your business' ability to adapt to change will make all the difference. **PCT**

Jim Fredericks is the executive director of the Professional Pest Management Alliance and senior vice president of public affairs for the National Pest Management Association. For more about PPMA, visit www.npmapestworld.org/ppma.

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SenesTech

www.senestech.com

SenesTech announced the launch of Evolve Soft Bait, a product designed to reduce fertility in rats. It is the first and only soft bait developed to control pest populations using technology that targets the rat population where it starts by restricting fertility in rats through nonlethal methods,SenesTech reported.

Evolve Soft Bait can be placed in many environments, including municipalities, parks, recreation facilities, sports venues, food processing facilities, correctional facilities, subways, medical facilities, agribusiness, zoos and residential locations, SenesTech said.



According to the company, the bait affects the rodent population beginning after one to two breeding cycles (four to six weeks), resulting in reduced pregnancies and less pups born.

SenesTech also introduced the Isolate Bait System with ContraPest, a contraceptive for rats that inhibits reproduction. The bait system, featuring a peel-off seal and integrated tank-tray unit, is designed for smaller pest management jobs. With a compact 8 fluid ounce-size, it is suitable for any scenario where less bait is needed, the manufacturer reported.

SenesTech said it is now offering ContraPest to a new vertical: municipalities.

Wastewater treatment facilities at municipalities are specifically ideal for ContraPest since chemicals cannot be introduced into the water supply, and ground-based stations may not be appropriate for many of the facilities, SenesTech reported. Currently, ContraPest is being used at wastewater treatment facilities in Washington and California.

Other municipalities have used it at parks, recreation facilities, correctional facilities, administrative offices and municipal housing.





Pelsis Group

www.pelsis.com



Pelsis Group launched an intelligent monitoring system to help manage the public health risks associated with flying insects. Initially available with the Cobra LED insect light trap (ILT), Pelsis' proprietary digital technology delivers remote monitoring of flying insect activity in real time, the company said.

With the ability to set thresholds for insect catch rates and glueboard capacity, the system sends notifications to users alerting them to activity requiring attention, according to Pelsis.

Data is reported through either the Pelsis digital app or web portal, both of which allow users to remotely set thresholds for flying insect activity and data reporting frequency.

The new technology was developed with California-based BrightAI. **PCT**

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HOUSTON, TX

MAR 10–12 | LEGISLATIVE DAY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY 7–9 | WOMEN'S FORUM
ATLANTA, GA

MAY 9–10 | WORKFORCE SUMMIT
ATLANTA, GA

JUNE 11–13 | EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP FORUM
NEW ORLEANS, LA

JUNE 2024

GLOBAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY SUMMIT
SOUTH FLORIDA

JULY 16–18

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Hulett Environmental Services' board certified entomologist Benjamin Gillenwaters often hits the road in South Florida to share his collection of preserve pests and talk bugs with kids.

COURTESY OF BENJAMIN GILLENWATERS

Doing Good

The holidays are about more than just trying to obtain the hottest new toys or must-have gadgets. They are a chance to reflect on how you can do good and make an impact in your community.

Hulett Environmental Services might be best known around its South Florida headquarters for its quirky billboards and television commercials.

But the family-owned company, which has been around for more than 50 years, specializing in controlling termites, rodents, mosquitoes and more, prides itself on its community involvement as well.

The company places an emphasis on its community by participating in an array of outreach events throughout Palm Beach and the Treasure Coast counties. Hulett has taken part in the Kids Cancer Foundation, Big Dog Ranch Rescue and career days at local elementary and middle schools, trying to make a positive impact on its communities.

Earlier this year, Hulett visited The Kings Academy in West Palm Beach, Fla., to host the fourth annual Bug Day with Benjamin Gillenwaters, Hulett's board certified and graduate entomologist from the University of Florida. Bug Day was the culmination of a week's worth of class studies surrounding the topic of insects in the first-grade curriculum at The Kings Academy.

To celebrate, the children dressed up as their favorite insect and attended a presentation by Hulett to learn fun facts about bugs, ask Gillenwaters questions and marvel over his collection of preserved pests.

"The bug costumes are definitely my favorite part," said Gillenwaters. "They are funny, and the kids' questions are, too. But I am always surprised by how much the kids know about bugs."

Career days are also a big hit at Hulett, such as with the recent visit to the pre-kindergarten classes at St. Joan of Arc. Catholic School in Boca Raton, Fla. The children are interested to learn about Gillenwaters' research as an entomologist and, of course, he brings his bugs.

Hulett finds other ways to give back as well. Frank Dowling, a vice president at Hulett, has served on the board at the Kids Cancer Foundation in West Palm Beach, Fla., for more than a decade and arranged for Gillenwaters to present a Bug Day for the children there. Gillenwaters brought bugs, activities and more for the kids.

"I enjoy presenting at the outreach events," Gillenwaters said, "especially for organizations like the Kids Cancer Foundation. We had a blast with the bug tattoos and coloring sheets. It is rewarding to work for a company that engages in the community." **PCT**

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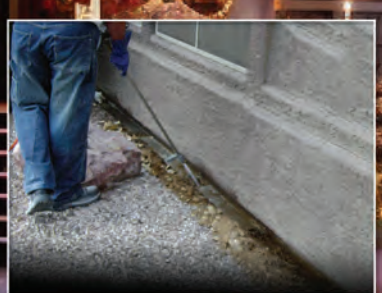
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