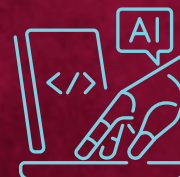


Guide To Labor Savings

With high inflation continuing to add stress to pest control companies, running a more efficient ship is as important as ever. Learn how PCOs have focused on hiring, culture, routing and more.



A ServiceTitan Product



Getting The Job Done Just Isn't Enough

Getting the job done as efficiently as possible, while delivering service worthy of a five-star review, is the standard.

For pest control companies that continue to face challenges regarding hiring and retention of employees, not to mention rising costs, getting the job done is made easier and more profitable by technology that is readily available and is rapidly advancing.

Reducing the amount of time needed to perform tasks remains a significant concern for so many companies, as you'll read more about in this PCT report, Guide to Labor Savings.

A company should be able to schedule and route its teams in ways that offer flexibility and work best for that company. Improving driver performance and efficiency, through monitoring of employees and equipment and use of real-time alerts and notifications, also can create savings.

And technicians and sales staff should be able to use technology to streamline selling, scheduling and providing service to customers, all while in the field. Technicians can benefit from seeing everything they need to know about the customer on one screen, with the sales team able to access statistics and assign personnel to multiple territories.

Those areas are ways FieldRoutes can be the right software partner, with its Intelligent Routing and route optimization, with the Fleet Pro integration offered from ServiceTitan, and with its FieldRoutes® Mobile app.

There's much more. Here's what Aaron Curtis, the chief experience officer of Alta Pest Control, told us during Ignite, FieldRoutes' conference for customers in Orlando, Fla., in August.

"I would recommend FieldRoutes to every pest control company that wants to grow their business, stay relevant, get to customers where they're at, communicate efficiently and automate systems so that they can deliver more efficiently," he said. "I would recommend FieldRoutes to companies that want to grow and scale — and to mom-and-pop companies that are looking for a way to better operate, see data at their fingertips and have reports that they never knew existed visualized on the dashboard."

Your business should choose the software partner that gives you the best chance to make your teams more efficient and productive, make your business more profitable and assist as you provide that five-star service for your customers.

We trust that you'll find this Guide to Labor Savings insightful as you lead your own company. And if you're ready to simplify, scale and grow, be assured that FieldRoutes is also ready to be a partner as you pursue the success you and your business deserve. ●



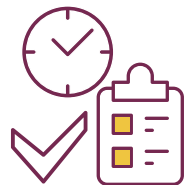
Dan Blake

Chief Technology Officer, FieldRoutes



Up for **the Challenge**

With many costs still higher than in years past, pest control companies are finding ways to be more efficient with hiring, routing and more.



As it has been for the past few years, labor remains one of the biggest single expenses for pest control companies around the country.

The ability to find and retain employees is at the center of most companies' labor issues, but mix in the cost of inflation — specifically related to rising gas prices — and you have all the right ingredients to give any pest management professional a headache.

“We want to make sure that our employees are making a livable wage, but with the drastic inflation for food and living costs, it’s really hard to keep up with that,” said Wendy Lund, administrative director at Accel Pest & Termite Control, Virginia Beach, Va.

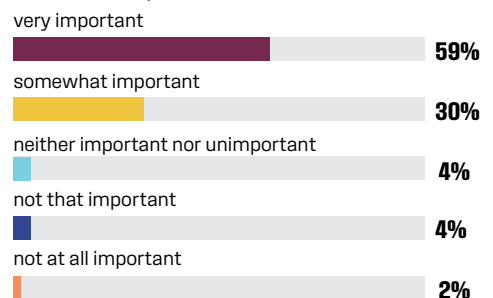
And that’s why productivity and efficiency continue to be buzzwords. Companies are still searching for ways to increase productivity, according to a recent survey of pest control company owners, executives and technical directors.

The good news? Sixty-one percent of PMPs reported that productivity had increased over the last 12 months thanks to a number of factors such as increased route density, choice of equipment and tools, training and clear communication with employees about productivity goals. Overall, labor savings, or reducing amount of time it takes to complete a task, remains front of mind for many PCOs — 59 percent said it was very important to improve labor savings at their company.

“We’re also looking at our customer retention. That’s the other key driver — the easiest way to grow revenue is retain your current customers,” said Curtis Rand, vice president of operations at Rose Pest Solutions, Northfield, Ill. “So, we’ve got to make sure that’s a focus.” ●

Task Manager

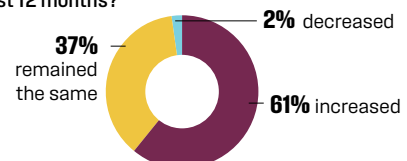
How important is it at your location to improve labor savings; that is, to reduce the amount of time it takes to perform certain tasks?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 297

More Efficient

Has productivity/efficiency at your company location increased, decreased or remained the same over the past 12 months?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 297



Hire Right



Being fully staffed and having the right people in place can set your productivity levels on a path to success.

Employees put the labor into “labor savings.” Being fully staffed with customer service representatives, sales representatives, technicians and more who are jazzed to work for your company is a great first step in improving productivity.

But while the labor market has recovered some in the last year, some PCOs said it remains challenging to get potential employees to apply for open positions and see a possible career path within the pest control industry.

“With unemployment running below 4 percent, it’s still a challenging labor market. We as an industry need to continue to work to improve wages for our field staff so that they can make a career out of it,” said Jamie Ogle, CEO of Lloyd Pest Control in San Diego.

Here are some creative ways that pest control companies across the nation are attracting, retaining and rewarding their workforce, all of which can lead to better productivity and efficiency.

Focus on hiring the right people. PCOs are dealing with a variety of concerns when it comes to hiring. Wendy

Lund, administrative director at Accel Pest & Termite Control, Virginia Beach, Va., said it’s been a challenge to find candidates for entry-level positions such as customer service representatives.

“We’re finding that a lot of our candidates end up being overqualified for that type of position,” said Lund. “And unfortunately, since we’re a smaller company, we don’t have those higher pay positions.”

Meredith Shaw Miller, business manager at Pest-X Exterminating in Winston-Salem, N.C., has been seeing an increase in candidates who agree to an interview then don’t show up. To help combat that, Pest-X increased its base pay to help encourage more candidates to follow through with an interview.

“I think there’s a lot of preconceived notions about the pest control industry,” Shaw Miller said. “Candidates might not know all of the opportunities that our industry offers. But once we get them in for an interview, we can sell them on how wonderful it is.”

And how you market open positions plays a big role as well. Whether you’re advertising positions on ZipRecruiter, LinkedIn or Facebook, the words you use

to advertise what the position is can help get the right candidates through the door.

“We started looking at it like we had to market for applicants — be more creative in how we write our ads and more aggressive in where we place job posting,” said Ogle. “We started looking at it as part of a sales and marketing function, not just a hiring function. So we had to change our mindset a little bit.”

That mentality applies to All-American Pest Control in Nashville, Tenn., said President Erin Richardson.

“We have a full-time employee who is consistently recruiting every day,” she said. “We found that one of the key metrics is the time it takes from when we receive a resume to having an interview. There’s so much competition out there for great team members that if we don’t act fast, they will likely have gone to another company that acted faster.”

Lean into employee referrals. Your company may already offer referral bonuses or programs, but utilizing recommendations from current employees can be a vital pipeline for finding qualified people to add to the team.

“The most qualified candidates we get are from employee referrals,” said Lund. “We have an employee referral bonus structure that we are constantly reminding our employees about.”

Pest-X Exterminating also offers an employee referral bonus, and Shaw Miller agrees with Lund that referral candidates tend to have a seamless transition.

“Referrals already have that backing behind them,” said Shaw Miller. “They tend to be a little bit more engaged because they have friends working here.”

And in addition to offering referral bonuses, PCOs are making sure they take the time to invest in new employees and that they’re properly trained.

For Lund, it was vital to establish a process for new hire training within the last year.

“You have to have structured new hire training. That’s one of the mistakes we’ve made in the past where we didn’t have a solid plan when a new employee started,” Lund said. “We’ve really focused in the past year on making sure that we have a structured training plan for when new employees come in, and it makes a world of difference getting them up to that productive employee level faster.”

And it’s not just about training new hires, it’s about being transparent as a company with any career advancement opportunities.

“We have found that the best employees who are going to be rock stars for us want to contribute confidently and quickly, so we have remapped our entire training program in a way that we can get them up to speed and out on their own as fast as possible,” said Richardson.

Promote company culture. We all know how important key performance indicators (KPIs) are in tracking success as a company and using them to retain and reward employees.

But many companies are also finding other fun ways to embrace their company’s culture and reward employees.

It’s one thing to say you have a “great company culture” and then actually take the time to show your employees you mean it.

From kickball tournaments, handwritten birthday cards and company cruises, to a brag channel in Slack, companies are taking a hands-on approach when it comes to making sure their employees feel like part of a team.

“We’ve done a lot of cruises. This past February, we went to Cancun for a long weekend,” said Lund. “It’s just a chance for all of us to get away from the work environment and build that culture. It just gives everybody a reward for the hard work that they do.”

Curtis Rand, vice president of operations at Rose Pest Solutions, Northfield, Ill., said the company started using a digital tool to recognize and reward employees.

“Each of our employees gets a group of points that they can give to their co-workers for a job well-done,” said Rand. “They can build up those points in their bank and then redeem for gift cards. We found that’s been a big help with company culture, and it’s helped our people get to know each other a little bit better.”

Many companies are taking the time throughout the year to poll their employees on what’s working or what they’d like to see — and realizing company culture is a vital component of a company’s overall success.

“The work of culture and team development and leadership development is never-ending. It’s something that there’s not a finish line,” said Richardson. “It’s more of an evolution, and it really starts with getting to know your team members in a different way, and asking for their perspectives and opinions, asking what’s working and what’s not working, and just continuously evolving the culture.”

Don’t be afraid to take chances. It can be easy to keep calm and carry on — not looking for innovative ways to change or improve your company. But taking a

calculated risk can pay off.

All-American Pest Control is one of the first pest control companies to implement a four-day work week, according to Richardson. She says her team started doing research in 2016 and quickly realized if the idea was going to work, All-American had to change.

“We couldn’t just hire more people to make up for the extra days off. We had to rework how we did things to make it efficient for a four-day work week,” said Richardson.

And initially, after rolling out the four-day work week with technicians in 2018, Richardson says a few employees left the company.

“I was shocked. I thought it was going to be this golden tool for retention. I had a moment of thinking I did the wrong thing, or maybe there’s something going on with our company culture that I’m not aware of,” said Richardson. “Even though it was a little unsettling at the beginning, it actually turned out to be much better for our company.”

And with rising gas prices — especially in California where Lloyd Pest Control is located — Ogle said his company is making the transition to hybrid vehicles. He considered going with electric vehicles but found that hybrids are that sweet spot of affordability and ease.

“Electric is a little trickier because of ability to charge and needing a plug,” said Ogle. “But hybrids are a nice hedge against gas prices. You can get a little better gas mileage.”

Bottom line? Think about ways you can make strides to retain and reward your employees. Shaw Miller said it’s vital to the overall success of your company.

“Treat every current employee almost as a customer. You have to make your company better than other places that they could work,” said Shaw Miller. “It’s important to work on keeping your current employees happy. I think any way to improve that culture, that’s your best retention tool right there.” ●



Smart Moves

Artificial intelligence is all the rage – here’s how some PCOs are implementing the technology.

In a quest to improve productivity and efficiency, pest control companies are always looking for the best software, technology and apps. And with the influx of artificial intelligence (AI) available to do everything from answering phone calls to optimizing routes, PCOs are investigating and researching what AI technology is available — and which is best suited for their business needs.

Some companies, such as Rose Pest Solutions, Northfield, Ill., have implemented AI-based software at their offices. Curtis Rand, vice president of operations, says it’s all about finding the AI solutions that work best for your company. For example, Rose Pest Solutions is testing how AI software may benefit its phone system by tracking incoming customer leads and vital information such as what time of the year a customer calls and what pests they have.

“It helps to really isolate our marketing spend and focus on different times of the year based on what calls are coming in,” said Rand.

Rand said it can take time to see results, which Rose Pest Solutions has learned with an experiment using AI-based texting software designed to communicate with former customers. Rand said they’ve had a few successes but are still monitoring its potential.

Like Rand, other PMPs are dipping their toes into the AI world. But it seems many companies are finding ways to help with office tasks, as opposed to field work.

For example, Meredith Shaw Miller, business manager at Pest-X Exterminating in Winston-Salem, N.C., said she’s used ChatGPT to help create email campaigns and call scripts. While Erin Richardson, president of All-American Pest Control,

Nashville, Tenn., said her company is working with their current technology providers to see what AI-based offerings they may have to enhance current services.

Overall, PMPs view AI as a tool that has the potential to help streamline a variety of business processes. In fact, 68 percent of PMPs say using or promoting the use of new technology attracts potential employees to the pest control industry, according to the PCT survey.

“AI is definitely the future, so we’re trying to learn as much as we can and see how we can use it to our advantage,” said Wendy Lund, administrative director at Accel Pest & Termite Control in Virginia, who is just starting to research solutions. “AI is not about replacing employees. It’s about working with AI to make us more efficient, more productive.”

Do your homework and be prepared for some trial and error — and don’t be afraid of using AI technology, especially if it makes sense for your company.

“Remember, some options are going to work, and they might work for one company and not for another,” said Rand. “But I think we’ve got to continue to look at ways we can improve, because if we’re not improving, then we’re going backwards.” ●



Staying On Course

Route density plays a major role in running a successful pest control company.

There's the saying that "all roads lead to Rome." But when it comes to increasing production and efficiency, PMPs know that route density can make or break how profitable and successful a pest control company is.

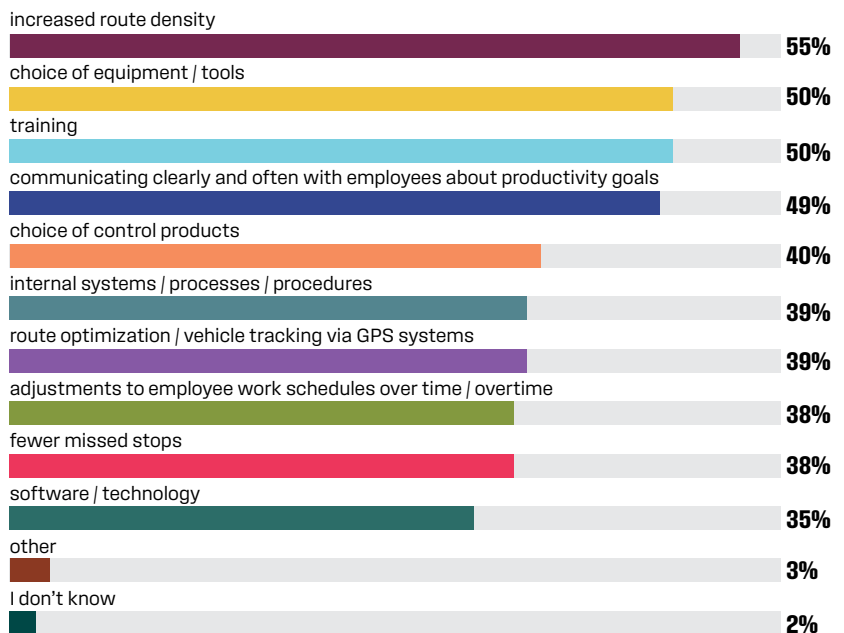
In fact, 72 percent of PMPs said that their current software optimizes routes, with 55 percent attributing increased route density as having a positive impact on their company.

So how can you optimize your routes? Here are a few tips from peers.

- Utilize the tools you have.** Wendy Lund, administrative director at Accel Pest & Termite Control, said the company uses its software to build, schedule and find recommended routes. Meredith Shaw Miller, business manager at Pest-X Exterminating, agrees that utilizing software has helped her company as well. "Our visual route manager software plus GPS software keep our routes tight," said Shaw Miller. "We're able to make sure people are getting to their stops, that they're not spending too much time idling."
- Focus on targeted marketing.** Increasing route density is more than having tight, efficient routes. It's about strategic customer acquisition too. "We'll do targeted marketing with certain Zip codes to see if that can lead to tighter routes," said Shaw Miller. Curtis Rand, vice president of operations, also implements this strategy at Rose Pest Solutions by tapping into outside marketing resources like a summer sales program and door-knocking campaigns.

Positive Impacts

Which factors had a positive impact on productivity/efficiency at your company in the past 12 months?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 297; Respondents could select multiple answers

- Follow the data.** Another benefit of implementing visual route manager software? It's easier to track and understand data, which can lead to making smarter business decisions on staffing, marketing and route density, said Erin Richardson, president, All-American Pest Control. In addition to tracking yearly and monthly customer retention rates, the company can see how many stops a technician makes per day, plus how many miles they've driven — and then make any necessary adjustments.

Overall, routing software not only can help with route density and fuel savings, but depending on the functionality of your software, it can allow technicians to send reports and information to clients instantly. And at the end of the day, it all adds up to being a reliable, efficient company.

"When it comes to pest control companies, density is key," said Lloyd Pest Control CEO Jamie Ogle. "If you're driving too much or spending too much time between appointments, you're not making money." •



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