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2026 GUIDE TO LABOR SAVINGS

Pest control companies are pushing productivity and efficiency to new heights by providing employees the tools they need to succeed.

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THE ANSWER TO A LABOR PROBLEM ISN'T ALWAYS MORE LABOR



Every few decades, the way companies operate changes more than it first appears.

Computers replaced paper records. The cloud made software accessible from anywhere. Mobile devices put the office in a technician's pocket.

The next change is different. Software is moving from a system that records and organizes work to one that can actually perform part of it.

Pest control may feel this shift particularly quickly because so much of running the business still depends on repetitive decisions and administrative work that software can increasingly handle on its own.

For years, labor savings meant making people more efficient. But people still sat at the center of almost every process, using the software and making the decisions.

AI changes that equation because more of the routine work can now happen without someone managing every step.

We are already seeing this with Solea customers. AI-generated routes have reduced drive time by more than 50% in some operations. Routine customer conversations can be handled without adding more CSRs, while collections and other administrative work can happen automatically in the background.

These may look like incremental improvements on their own, but together they start to change the economics of labor. For decades, growing a pest control company usually meant growing the organization behind it. More customers created more calls, more scheduling, more collections and eventually more people to manage all of it.

AI is beginning to break that relationship.

This is what Solea was built around. Previous generations of field service software were designed primarily to record and organize work. AI-native software can increasingly do the routine work itself, involving people when judgment, experience or a real human relationship actually matters.

The goal is not to remove people from pest control. It is to stop wasting good people on work that no longer needs them.

Pest control will always be a people business, and AI should make it more human, not less. Technicians can spend more time with customers, office teams can focus on more important problems, and managers can spend more time developing their teams and growing the business.

The companies that adopt this model early will be able to serve more customers without adding labor and overhead at the same rate.

We hope this guide gives you practical ideas you can bring back to your own business. Solea is proud to partner with PCT at a time when the relationship between labor, technology and growth in pest control is being rewritten.

Christopher Brodowski
Co-Founder & CEO
Solea AI

ALWAYS REACHING HIGHER

For the most part, PMPs are pleased with their companies' level of productivity and efficiency, but they are always looking for next-level performance. Technology and strategic thinking are helping them achieve it.

Historically, minimizing labor costs has been tied to hiring the right people, training them well and incentivizing them to high performance. While those factors continue to be vital to exceptional labor management efforts, pest management professionals (PMPs) are finding the tools they provide to support employee performance are every bit as critical.

Austin Burns, CEO of Burns Pest Elimination, Phoenix, Ariz., said his team uses route optimization technology, AI-generated data and reporting, as well as a host of other technology tools to streamline their processes and improve their decision making. "We have seen, on average, an 18% year-over-year gain in productivity across our service technician team because of our investments in new tools, as well as standardization of systems and processes," Burns said.

Rose Pest Solutions, Madison Heights, Mich., puts a strong emphasis on productivity as well. "We are always challenging ourselves to find better ways to serve our customers and create better experiences for our employees. The biggest opportunities we see right now are in automation, scheduling and AI," said Zach Bahrke, the company's director of operations. "We want to enable our customers to schedule services online, to expand AI-driven route optimization and to leverage technology to streamline day-to-day tasks so that each member of our team can spend their time as productively and meaningfully as possible."

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS KEY. Bahrke and Burns are among the 52% of PMPs who told PCT they saw productivity and efficiency rise in the past year. A June 2026 survey of pest control company owners, executives, managers and technical directors, conducted by Readex Research on behalf of PCT, found that another 46% maintained their levels year-over-year, while just 2% reported declines. The results underscore the priority business leaders place on improving productivity and efficiency — and the growing range of tools available to help them do so.

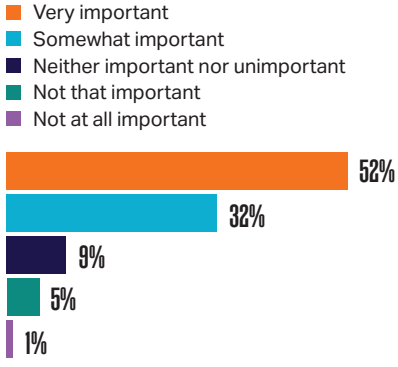
"We track a multitude of KPIs [key performance indicators] within each department and each branch to see how we're performing at the operational, marketing and sales levels — essentially, how well we're utilizing our time and being efficient throughout each day," Bahrke said. "We've seen measurable improvements through those KPIs, driven by investments in technology, training and process improvement."

The following pages include insights from Bahrke and Burns, along with John Speed, president of Kilauea Pest Control, Kailua, Hawaii; Court Parker, CEO, Bug Busters, Woodstock, Ga.; and Cherry Dobbs, HR manager, Bug Busters, into how they are making the most of those investments. •

NO TIME TO WASTE



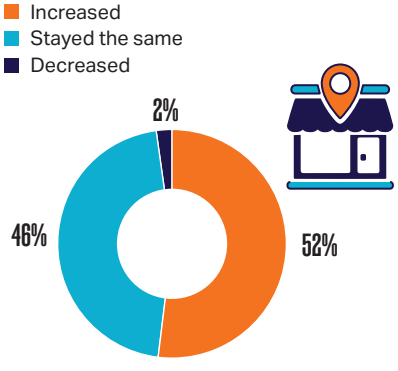
How important is it to reduce the time it takes to complete tasks at your service location?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 153

WELL-OILED MACHINES

How have productivity and efficiency changed at your service location over the past year?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 153



SUPPORTING YOUR TEAM WITH TECHNOLOGY

The investments you make in employee development, professionalism, knowledge and well-being can result in tremendous efficiency gains.

So many things go into running a productive and profitable business that it can be hard to determine which of your efforts are most consequential. What you can know with confidence, though, is that your people are always at the heart of your success. How you support them — with technology, training, processes and more — makes all the difference in how effective and efficient they are, as well as how they feel about the quality of their work life.

TECHNOLOGY DOES SOME HEAVY LIFTING. As technology becomes ubiquitous across the pest management industry, PMPs have plenty of options for supporting their teams and productivity initiatives. While some prefer more established automated tools and processes, others are going all-in on the latest AI tools. There's not one right answer, because every company has different needs, goals and customers.



"The potential of technology — AI in particular — is very exciting," said John Speed, president, Kilauea Pest Control. "It drives efficiency by improving training protocols, carrying out time-consuming day-to-day tasks so employees can spend their time on more valuable efforts, and supplying managers with metrics so they can identify challenges and opportunities in the field, on the phones or in the office."

Still, Speed is cautious about applying AI, always evaluating its effectiveness in a certain area against the tried-and-true processes and standards Kilauea Pest has in place. Notably, after comparing the quality of AI phone services against the services currently provided by the internal team with support from virtual assistants in the Philippines, he determined the technology doesn't yet meet the company's high standards for customer service.

"The technology may be efficient but, at least here in Hawaii, customers generally don't like speaking to a robot. They can get frustrated and even angry," Speed said. "At the end of the day, our costs are pretty good with human representatives, and we are certainly not planning to let anyone go because of new technology. We need people who understand our brand, goals and values to connect on a human level that instills trust in our company. AI technology can't do that right now."

Where *are* AI and other technologies meeting or exceeding PMPs' expectations? According to the PCT/Readex Research survey, 40% reported that technology has improved their ability to increase route density and efficiency, 36% said it has improved their communication with employees, 35% said it helps them manage employee schedules and overtime, and 35% said it has improved their ability to use data and reports for decision making. But technology's value doesn't stop there. It helps many companies with service issues, operations management, processes and workflows, marketing, training and more (see "Where Technology Excels" chart).

In fact, there are so many options for incorporating technology it can be difficult to know where to start. Bug Busters CEO Court Parker shared the perspective that new technology implementation can become a juggling act for small to mid-sized businesses whose team members already wear multiple hats.

"Technology is coming out left and right every single day, so we are selective and balance the time we commit to

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technology adoption against the time needed for other projects and normal day-to-day business activities. We utilize AI and other technology tools to our advantage where we can, and we continue to work toward using them more, but we're also focused on spending our time wisely on all aspects of the business," Parker said.

FUTURE STATE. One of the areas many PMPs believe should be improved in the coming months and years is technology management. As they choose to apply new tools across offices or divisions, they would like their systems to integrate or "talk with one another."

Austin Burns said that consolidating the technology Burns Pest Elimination is using would definitely take them one step further in their efficiency journey. "We don't want to get rid of any of the systems we're using, but we would benefit from having more integration across them," he said, suggesting a single platform that could enable his team to manage multiple solutions at once would be ideal. "For now, though, we are focused on remaining fluid — open to testing new products as AI continues to evolve."

When PCT asked the broader PMP audience what areas they expect to address with new or different technologies in the coming year, they named customer relationship management (CRM)/lead management (29%), marketing tools and automation (29%), customer notifications (26%), smart routing (25%) and inventory management (22%), along with process automation, reputation management, proposals, invoicing, quality assurance, HR and more (see "New Tech in the Year Ahead" chart).

A FRESH APPROACH TO TRAINING. Training, mentoring and coaching have the potential to be more targeted and meaningful than ever before, as data collection tools pinpoint areas of need, technology enables a variety of formats and business leaders recognize the need for a personalized experience.

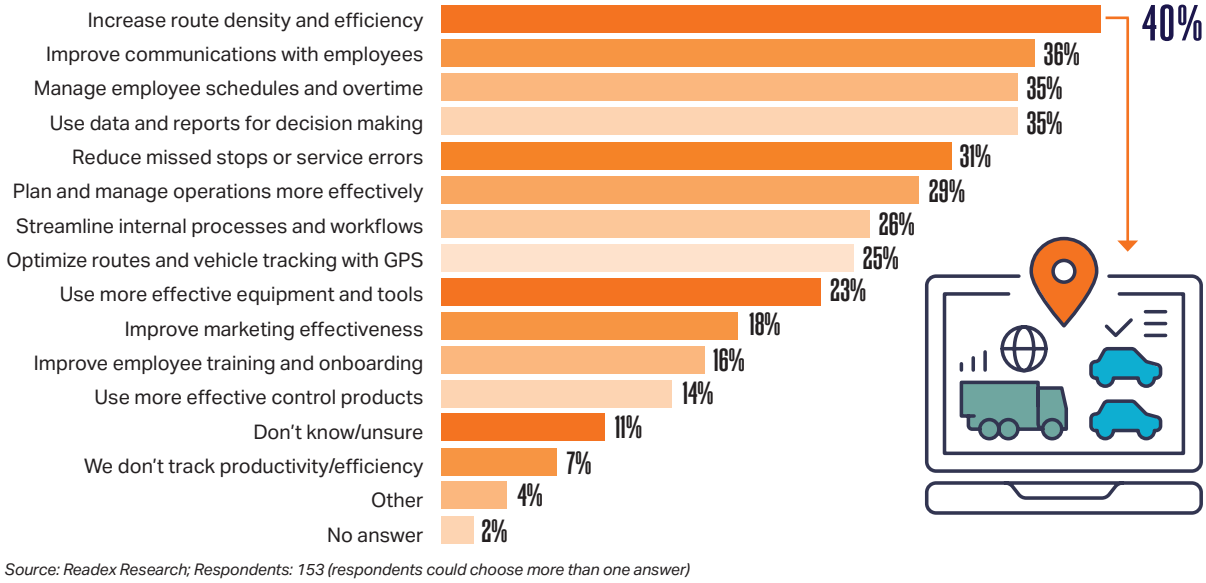
"Some people learn better by watching, some by doing and some by reading. If you address all three of those — through videos, hands-on instruction and written materials — retention levels are much higher," said Parker. Bug Busters makes training materials easily accessible to employees through their corporate digital workspace and internal YouTube channel, he said, so they can refer to it anytime, anyplace.

"Say a customer hands a service technician a check. He remembers that he doesn't have to take the check back to the office but can't recall how to upload it. He uses his phone to quickly select the appropriate video from our YouTube library and gets the step-by-step instructions in seconds. He uploads the check and hands it back to the customer," Parker said.

Cherry Dobbs, who heads up HR at Bug Busters, shared the importance of gauging each employee's comfort level with technology before expecting them to use digital training tools. "During onboarding, we ask new employees to download all the apps they will need, then we go over the navigation, features and functions with them. If someone

WHERE TECHNOLOGY EXCELS

In the last 12 months, technology has improved PMPs' service location's ability to:



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 153 (respondents could choose more than one answer)

takes a little longer to catch on or seems hesitant to use the technology, we let their manager know so they can provide extra support as the person settles into their day-to-day routine," Dobbs said.

At Rose Pest Solutions, training is centralized through the Rose University platform, a learning management system (LMS) designed to ensure every employee stays up to date on their learning trajectory. "We put all our training, for established employees as well as new hires, onto the platform," said Rose Pest's Zach Bahrke. "We can track their progress individually rather than just branch by branch to see what they've completed and whether we need to follow up with them. They can always go back to training, too, if they need a refresher. We've found this system to be very efficient: It streamlines delivery of new processes, procedures and protocols as well as training materials."

STANDARDIZING PROCESSES.

In addition to technology and training enhancements, having the right systems and processes in place is crucial to optimizing productivity, Burns said. The management team at Burns Pest Elimination has streamlined many of its protocols to ensure services are being completed consistently and with the utmost efficiency.

"There are a million different ways to treat a house," he said. "We evaluated our workflows from how our vehicle is organized to what we do when we get to the account. What door do we open? What do we grab first? Where do we start? We looked at that process, as well as many others, and put a standardized system in place for each and every one of our technicians to follow."

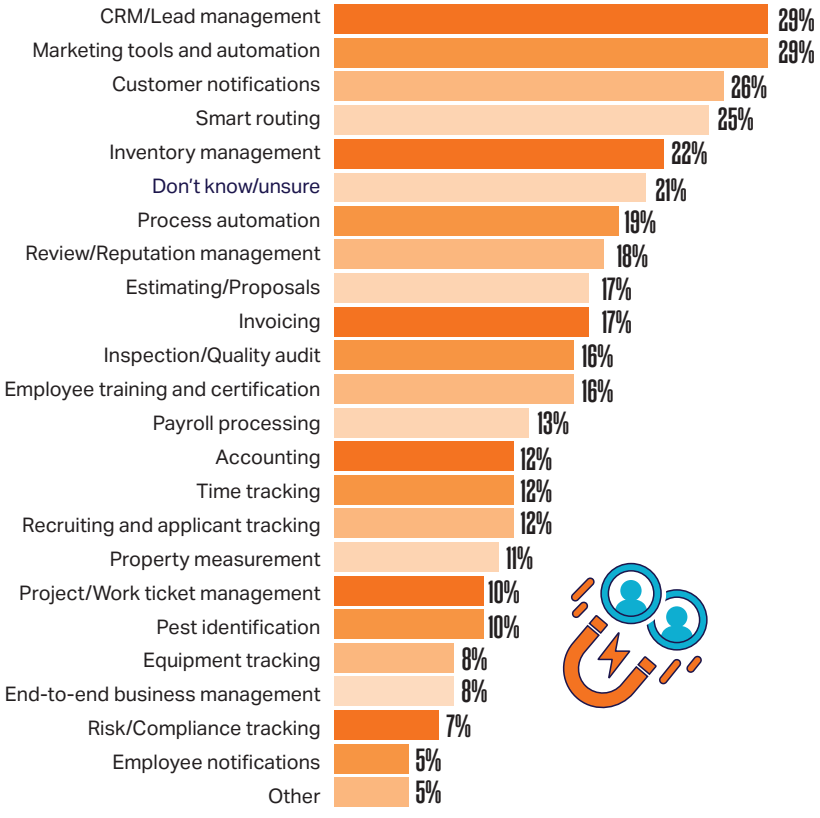
Asked how they went about evaluating their existing workflows, Burns said they identified what high-productivity employees were doing that other team members weren't. "We are lucky to have people here, some with 20 or 30 years of experience, who really know what they're doing and have figured out the best way to deliver a service. We thought about how we could create a repeatable model to teach other technicians, even new hires, how to achieve similar levels of efficiency."

Upgrades to the Burns University training program have empowered new technicians to go into the field with greater performance potential. "We've seen a massive improvement in the amount of work our newly hired technicians are able to do once they hit the 90-day mark," Burns said. "By investing in our people through training, technology, processes, mentoring and coaching, we've been able to deliver a customer experience that's second to none. That leads to customer loyalty, referrals and, ultimately, additional growth."

It can also lead to greater employee satisfaction, Parker said. "When your company is productive, your team members can live a better life. They end up making more money and they have more personal time," he said. "When you're running really tight routes that they can cover in an 8-to-5 workday, they get home feeling relaxed and still have energy to go work out and spend time with their family. So by increasing your efficiency, you are actually building a better culture for your team — one where people want to stay and do their part toward the company's success." ●

NEW TECH IN THE YEAR AHEAD

In the coming year, PMPs expect to use new or different technology to improve productivity/efficiency in these areas:



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 153 (respondents could choose more than one answer)

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8 TIPS FOR INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY

Five productivity-focused leaders shared tried-and-true tricks of the trade with PCT readers. Here's what they said.











SUBJECT: PEOPLE

ZACH BAHRKE: Remember that the overarching goal is to enhance people, not replace them. The best investments in technology and efficiency free your employees to spend more time building relationships, solving problems, and delivering exceptional service to customers inside and outside your organization. Plus, by elevating the quality of people's work life, you'll create a ripple effect that improves morale, increases customer satisfaction and drives sustainable growth.

CHERRY DOBBS: Today's technology has the potential to not only drive high productivity but also attract and retain top talent. Many new hires choose Bug Busters because they know we are technology-oriented. Turnover is lower, too, because people are more likely to stay with a high-productivity company.

JOHN SPEED: When you're measuring productivity, remember to consider the soft metrics, too. For example, how many of your employees stay on long-term, building their institutional knowledge and relationships with customers and teammates? How does their five or 10 years of experience factor into your company's performance? This plays into another metric as well: how long your recurring customers stay on with you. Our average is seven-plus years, and we're working toward increasing that number every year.

SUBJECT: TECHNOLOGY

CHERRY DOBBS: There are many, many technology options in the market today. Focus on and update those with the potential to improve your productivity every year. The more advanced the technologies you use, the more time your employees will get back at the end of the day. That can result in overall efficiency gains that help your business grow.

ZACH BAHRKE: Keep an open mind and don't be afraid to experiment with different technologies until you find what works best for you. Learn from failures, continue to improve your processes and systems, and remember that this is an ongoing journey, not a one-time investment.

SUBJECT: PROCESSES, SYSTEMS & WORKFLOWS

COURT PARKER: Cash flow is vital to productivity and efficiency, so keep it flowing! Put as many customers as possible on a monthly auto bill payment plan, and ask for payment by credit card or ACH — *not* check. Checks can slow down your collections process and compromise your efficient operations.

AUSTIN BURNS: Identify where bottlenecks exist — where there is a bit of inefficiency in the business — and take those on one bite at a time through technology or a change in process or workflow. You might be surprised to see how much efficiency can be gained by fixing one little thing. For us, a handful of small changes have resulted in game-changing productivity gains.

COURT PARKER: One of the biggest productivity killers in our industry is drive time. If you're thinking about growing and you're starting out small, don't take on customers who are way outside your service area. If your service technician is spending an hour driving to get to an account instead of servicing more accounts closer together, you're losing time and productivity. •

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"I would choose Solea 100 times over any other CRM."



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