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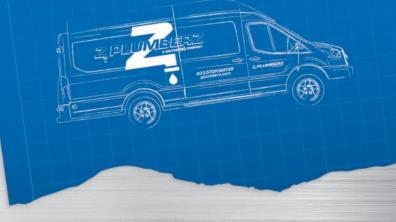


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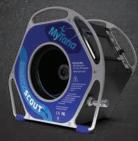
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ON THE COVER

Mitch Kenney, owner of Colepepper Plumbing & Drains, started as a one-man operation in 2014 and has grown his company rapidly into a multimillion-dollar enterprise, without letting customer service standards drop. Kenney works hard at creating a recognizable brand and hopes to open another location in the next five years. (Photography by Ed Carreon)

COMING IN AUGUST

Waterblasting & Waterjetting Cleaning and Accessories

MONEY MANAGER: Learning the rules of overtime pay SAFETY FIRST: In-house safety audits are good for business TOUGH JOB: Dewatering challenges for a big pipeline project

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NUCURE THE ORIGINAL TRUE COLD CURE UV

NuFlow has teamed up with Pro-Kanal to introduce our newest technology, NuCure Cold Cure UV (CCUV), the original true cold cure UV-LED system. Pro-Kanal has been supplying their Double Helix, low voltage LED UV light core technology to the market since 2016. By combining Double Helix technology with NuFlow's proprietary Cold Cure UV resins we've created an evolutionary leap in light curing technology.

WHAT MAKES NUFLOW'S UV-CURED LINING DIFFERENT?

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Cold Cure Resin Technology

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NuCure GRP Liner Tubes

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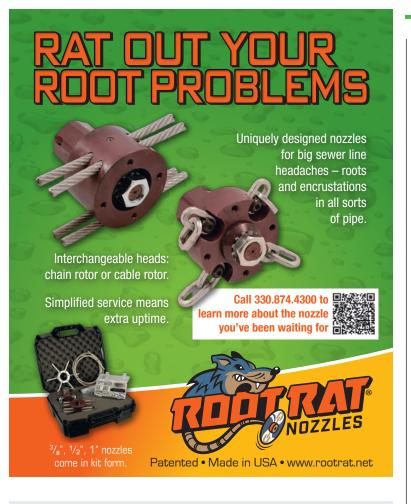
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Kayla Bisnette

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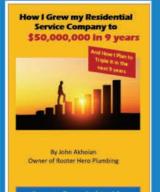
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Your Version of Success

Every business takes a different journey on the path to success

usiness success means something different to everyone. Some people want to work for themselves. They have an entrepreneurial spirit that drives them to build and create. They want to make the decisions and set their course.

Others enjoy the work and take it seriously but don't want the added responsibility and pressure of running their own business; they are happy being a valued employee.

Obviously there's no one career path that fits everyone. We all have to find our own way.





In May, *Cleaner* featured a company that started out small — one guy going out on his own. Bizzy Bee Plumbing has since grown into a large, profitable business, passing the million-dollar mark in revenue while continuing to expand. Owner Robert Schwachenwald emphasizes quality and professionalism. He invests in advanced technology and training for his employees, and he maintains a strong marketing effort that includes custom branding.

Last month, we featured a completely different kind of company, but it's no less successful. Big Dawg Plumbing & Backflow is owned by Michael Reed, and he's a one-man operation.

It's not that Reed doesn't want to grow. He has carved out a niche in the plumbing and drain cleaning industry, has a strong clientele for whom he does backflow testing, and has built a reputation for high-end shower installation.

That reputation is important to him. It's built on his honesty and directness with customers — and it's crucial to his business. Reed hired an employee two years ago and eventually had to let him go when his high standards for service weren't being met. Having all the control over each interaction with his customers guarantees the same high level of service on each job. Because of that dedication, Reed's customers don't call someone else when he can't give them immediate service.

Here at *Cleaner*, one of the ways we measure success is how many eyes we get on our content when it's posted on the website. The analytics for our online content help gauge what topics you're most interested in and what articles you find the most helpful.

I usually only look at recent content to see how it was received, but taking a look back over previous years also provides a lot of insight into what topics are most popular and what may be worth revisiting. Since this is the start of a new decade, I spent some time looking back at the content that filled the pages of *Cleaner* over the past 10 years.

Starting this month, for the rest of 2020 *Cleaner* will be featuring a different Best of the Decade article. July starts out with the top Tech Perspective story, which discusses how bore planning software can make your horizontal directional drilling jobs more efficient, costeffective and safe. Vermeer provided the expert source in that article and has also contributed an update on how the technology has evolved over the past 10 years while still fulfilling the original goal of helping contractors do their jobs safely and profitably.

No matter what your version of success looks like, I hope you are on your way to achieving it.

Enjoy this month's issue. c

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BRANCHING OUT <u>Finding a Niche in Municipal Work</u>

If you've stuck to serving residential customers for many years and never ventured into the world of municipal contracts, making the move could be intimidating. But if you can get a foothold with municipalities in your area and prove yourself, it can lead to consistent and profitable work. Contractors who have regularly done work on the municipal side offer some advice in this online exclusive. >>cleaner.com/featured

VEHICLE TRACKING **GPS System Improves** Company's Profitabi

This online exclusive takes a look at Rub-A-Dub Plumbing of Tyler, Texas, and the many benefits the company realized once it made an investment in GPS tracking software for its vehicle fleet. If that's something you've considered but haven't yet made the move, use Rub-A-Dub Plumbing's experiences with the software for some insight. >>cleaner.com/featured



"Everyone wants their website to rank No. 1 ... but don't obsess over rankings. Searchers are savvy to ads, and they know that just because a website is first or an ad is first, that doesn't mean it's the best choice."

and How You Should Respond >>cleaner.com/featured



BE BOLD The Benefits of a **Good Branding Strategy**

It doesn't matter how well you can do the work if you're not the company that comes to mind for people when they encounter a plumbing-related problem. Memorable branding is vital, and the companies featured in this online exclusive have all put careful thought into how they go about it. >>cleaner.com/featurec

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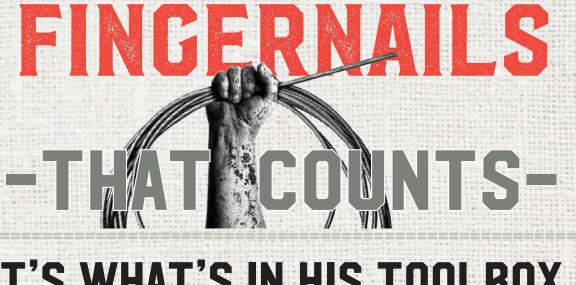


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contractor **PROFILE**

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★ Mitch Kenney, owner of Colepepper Plumbing & Drains, started as a one-man operation in 2014 and has grown his company rapidly, without letting customer service standards drop.

BUILDING BURDING BRAND

A memorable mascot and distinctive radio ads promote San Diego firm's services and push profits higher.

By Ken Wysocky // Photography by Ed Carreon

any factors have contributed to the dramatic and rapid growth at Colepepper Plumbing & Drains, which morphed from a one-man operation into a multimillion-dollar-a-year enterprise since its inception in 2014.

But to owner Mitch Kenney, it all essentially boils down to three simple business strategies: Charge premium service rates. Hire people who know how to sell those services. And use the company's trucks and radio ads to project a brand image that makes the phone ring.

In addition, the San Diego-based company aims to dramatically increase its drain cleaning business, which currently generates about 50% of the company's revenue. Kenney would like to see highermargin drain work eventually produce 70% of the company's revenue.

"If customers use us to clean their drains, there's a good chance they'll use us for plumbing, too," he says.

Some plumbers might scoff at the notion that a company can succeed by charging substantially more than competitors, or that hiring salespeople is a worthwhile expenditure, or that building brand recognition should be a top priority.

Nonetheless, it's difficult to argue with the results at Colepepper. Kenney started out with one truck in 2014; by 2018, he was running 16 service trucks. Employment grew from one to 24. And gross revenue roughly doubled every year, he says.

facility in 2017. And it doesn't appear as though the rapid growth has affected customer service; the company currently has a 4 1/2-star rating out of a possible five stars on Google reviews, based on more than 325 reviews.

UNFORGETTABLE TRUCKS

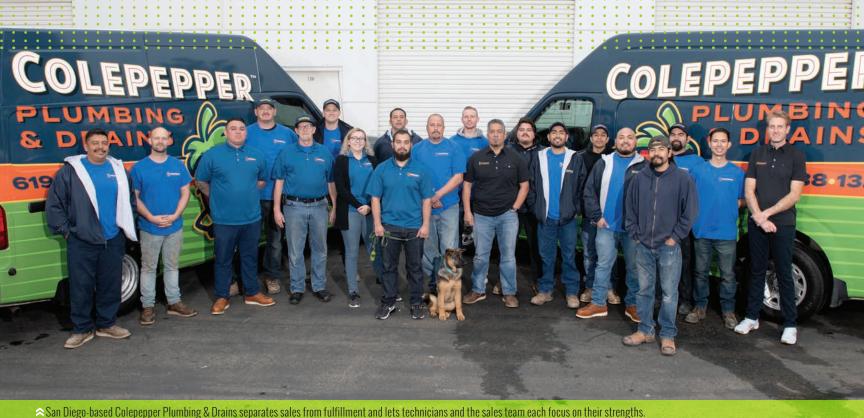
The company's 16 service vehicles - mostly Nissan NV2500 high-roof cargo vans — are the linchpins in the company's branding campaign. Kenney, 34, opted for the Nissans for several reasons, including their warranties and reliability.

But he also liked their taller bodies, which provide more room for parts and equipment; each truck carries about \$10,000 worth of repair parts and other items. They also provide more space for advertising.

Colepepper **Plumbing & Drains**

LOCATION: San Diego **OWNER:** Mitch Kenney **FOUNDED: 2014 EMPLOYEES: 24 SERVICES:** Residential service and repair, drain cleaning SERVICE AREA: San Diego County WEBSITE: www.colepepperplumbing.com





Creating a bond with customers

At Colepepper Plumbing & Drains in San Diego, an integrated marketing campaign that centers on eye-catching new vinyl wraps for service trucks also includes another important branding element: radio advertising.

Since April 2019, the company has run roughly 300 30-second radio ads a month, aimed at raising the company's profile for drain cleaning services. Mitch Kenney, company owner, declines to say how much the company spends on radio ads, but notes that it works.

"It's a lot of money," he says. "But we know it's been successful because we always ask customers how they heard about us."

Kenney decided to invest in radio advertising because he heard how successful it could be both from speakers at seminars and from his experience at other plumbing companies. He believes his company's ads make the company's phones ring because they create a likeable image for the company that's relatable to the average customer, as opposed to ads that do little more than tout a company's abilities.

"We call it customer bonding," he explains. "Most companies use typical ad speak: 'We're Joe's Tile. We're the best tilers on the planet, and we've been doing it since 1952,' for instance. Most people just tune out stuff like that. But our ads don't sounds like your typical radio ads."

Most of the ads are humorous and center on two things: a \$71 drain cleaning special aimed at getting customers to call or Kenney talking with his 7-year-old daughter, Brooklynn, who plays the role of an aspiring drain cleaner. "She's adorable," Kenney says. "You can't go wrong with kids in ads."

"The taller roofs make them more visible," he says. "Think about how much companies are willing to pay for a billboard located alongside a freeway. These trucks essentially are rolling billboards."

Furthermore, Kenney hired a marketing firm in 2019 to develop a more memorable visual brand for the company. A designer at the firm felt an animated mascot would stand out compared to other plumbing trucks in the market. The result is a play on the company's name: A hip, friendly looking hot pepper, wearing a smile and sunglasses and wielding a pipe wrench.

"He's kind of cute and cuddly," Kenney says. "We call him 'Mr. Colepepper.' He gives off a very positive vibe."

Then Kenney invested in vinyl wraps featuring the pepper and a striking color combination of black, green and orange. Before, Colepepper trucks were orange, which Kenney describes as noticeable, but not really memorable.

"But now that they're rebranded with the new pepper logo, our trucks get noticed big-time," he says, noting that more and more customers now tell dispatchers that seeing the trucks prompted them to call. "We never really used to hear that before."

SPEND MONEY TO MAKE MONEY

The price of visibility is not cheap: \$15,000 for design services and another \$50,000 for the vinyl wraps. But Kenney says he knows it'll pay for itself in the long run, if it hasn't already done so.

"If people remember us, then it shows we're top of mind in terms of awareness," he says. "That's what it's all about when you're building a brand. But it takes time, too — that phone doesn't start ringing right away."

A third-generation plumber (his father and grandfather were plumbers), Kenney concedes that his approach to branding isn't for everyone. "It all depends on your goals," he says. "If you want to stay small, then you really don't need to build

a brand — it's probably a waste of money.

"But if you want to be a household name like I do, then you need to shift over to building a brand," he continues. "My goal is to be omnipresent in the San Diego market.

"We need to build a brand because, in this industry, customers tend to commoditize plumbing (choose contractors based on only price)," he adds. "But since we charge premium prices, we need to build a brand that people like and feel good about. ... And that can help overcome price objections."

"If people remember us, then it shows we're top of mind in terms of awareness. That's what it's all about when you're building a brand."

Mitch Kenney

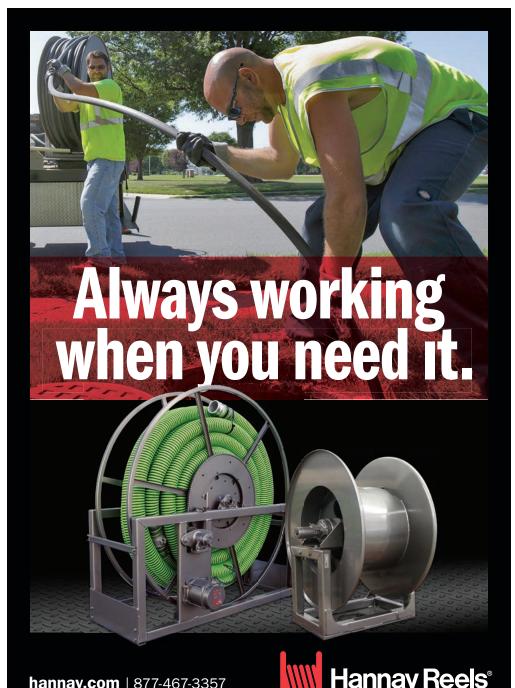
A NEW PATH

Kenney never planned to be a plumber and drain cleaner. While growing up in Denver, he worked for his father and at one time considered taking over the family business upon his dad's retirement. But that didn't pan out, so in 2008, he took a different path.

"I tried to make money in different ways over the years," he says. "I had minor success, but nothing noteworthy. ... I wasn't even sure I wanted to stay in plumbing. But eventually I decided I had to pick one thing and focus on it. And I decided that plumbing had the biggest upside."

So in 2014, he established Colepepper as a part-time venture that quickly turned into a full-time job. (The company's name comes from his father's surname; Kenney thought Colepepper Plumbing sounded better than Kenney Plumbing.)

Kenney says a lot of his business knowledge came from working for larger, successful companies and observing what they did right. And a big part of that was pricing services high enough to account for their costs and providing high-enough profit margins to plow money back into their businesses.



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Too many contractors base their rates on what everyone else is charging. Or they have only a vague idea of what their costs are and subsequently don't charge enough to be able to pay employees well or invest in newer, more productive tools and equipment and nicelooking service vehicles, he says.

"For most guys, it's a crapshoot. If you don't know how to price things, find someone who can help you do it. Single-digit profit margins are fairly common in this industry. But we help protect the health of this country. Why should we settle for 5% profit margins?"

Kenney says he aims for a 35% net profit margin. "We're currently not achieving that, but it's our goal."

SERIOUS SELLING

To generate significant revenue that, in turn, results in substantial profit margins, technicians are trained to thoroughly inspect homes for possible major problems. For a clogged sink drain, for instance, technicians always examine the line with a pipeline inspection camera. But they also then inspect as many other drainlines in the home as possible, including sewer laterals, to uncover potential problems, Kenney says.

If technicians identify a serious pipe problem that requires a whole-house repipe, for instance, or (trenchless) pipe rehab using pipe "Single-digit profit margins are fairly common in this industry. But we help protect the health of this country. Why should we settle for 5% profit margins?'

lining or epoxy-spray technology, one of the company's two salesmen visits the job site. It takes professional communicators to sell expensive projects like these, and overcome price objections, Kenney says. (The company currently subcontracts pipe lining and epoxy-spray services.)

"Like many industries, we've decided to separate sales from fulfillment," he explains. "We let the technicians (the fulfillment side) do what they are great at, which is the technical part of the job. And on the sales side, we develop and seek out professional communicators and relationship builders to do what they are great at, which is to generate sales."

To prevent price objections, technicians and salesmen are trained to let customers know in advance that Colepepper charges more than the average plumber. But here's the key: They also explain why, pointing out things like technicians' experience, the technology they use, their ability to do jobs right the first time, how clean they leave job sites and how fast they complete projects, as opposed to contractors that start a job, leave for a week and then return.



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» Jeff Willis feeds jetter hose into a toilet drain to clear a blocked lateral line.

Coperations Manager George Alvarez (standing, left) holds a weekly meeting with employees. Creating a strong foundation with everyone on the same page is key to Kenney's plans to expand the business.



"We also offer a lifetime warranty on our work, which is huge for combatting price objections," he adds. "So if we mess up and something fails prematurely, the customer is covered for life. And if customers say they don't need a lifetime warranty, we use it as a negotiating tool — say, drop it down to a five-year warranty in exchange for a lower price."

Some plumbers charge lower prices because they want to gain the proverbial "customer for life." But Kenney says that philosophy isn't always valid, citing studies that show after 12 months most customers don't call the same contractors over and over, no matter how pleased they are with the work performed.

"It's not that we don't want customers for life," he explains. "We're just facing the reality that the odds of them doing business with us, no matter how much they like us, go way down after 12 months from their initial purchase. This has been proven by a lot of sophisticated testing and surveying.

"It's easier to retain long-term business with a low-cost business model, but it's harder with a high-cost model like ours."

EMPHASIS ON DRAINS

Looking ahead, Kenney sees a continued shift toward cleaning drains, which is more profitable than plumbing repairs.

To clean larger drains, the company owns a Brute cart-mounted water jetter (9 gpm at 4,000 psi) made by Jetters Northwest, with nozzles made by StoneAge, Enz and US Jetting.

The company also owns Super Midi Miller and Mini Miller drain machines built by Picote Solutions. Service trucks carry drum cable machines manufactured by Gorlitz Sewer & Drain, one for small drains and one for mainlines. For inspecting drainlines, the company owns seven RIDGID SeeSnake standard, Mini and nanoReel pipeline cameras.

"We'd like to own the drain cleaning market here in San Diego," he says. "We want to be the No. 1 company people think about when they have a clogged drain."



In five years, Kenney's goal is to have 100 service trucks and open another location, perhaps in the Southwest or in Florida. To him, it's just a matter of repeating what the company currently is doing in terms of branding, pricing and selling.

"Right now we're slowing down a bit and shoring up our processes — making sure we have a strong foundation and good margins," he says. "I want to get really good at developing repeatable processes so we can easily scale them in other locations. If we can make it work here (in a tough state regulatory climate), we can make it almost anywhere." **c**

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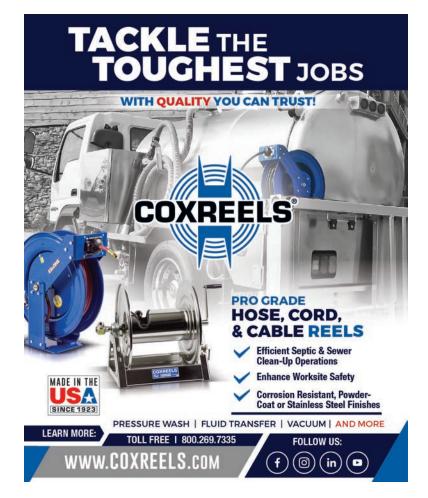


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EDITOR'S NOTE: This month's Best of the Decade first appeared in the **October 2010** issue of *Cleaner* and has since been one of the most read Tech Perspective articles on Cleaner.com. Please note that the writer and source are no longer affiliated with Vermeer, and the company has provided an update about the software it offers today (see sidebar at end of article).



tech PERSPECTIVE

Tech Perspective looks at technology-related issues and provides information and advice that cleaning professionals can apply to equipment selection and to their daily work in the field. Industry members are welcome to offer ideas for this column. Please direct them to editor Kim Peterson, editor@cleaner.com.

Bore Planning Made Easier

Intuitive and user-friendly software helps progressive contractors take the guesswork out of planning horizontal directional drilling projects

By Greg Ehm



2019

Bore planning software helps companies plan bores quickly and easily. (Photos and screenshots courtesy of Earth Energy)

orizontal directional drilling is challenging and difficult work fraught with unknown obstacles. While it's not possible to eliminate every obstacle, bore planning software developed by drill manufacturers can help small and large contractors create a bore plan that minimizes risks.

Bore planning software was introduced 15 years ago. However, those basic programs helped contractors design only the pilot bore. While the software helped streamline the planning process, it was time-consuming and not widely used. Many contractors would just drill and hope for the best.

"Many of the software applications also allow users to create a permanent record of the completed bore that can be used as a reference to help generate more accurate bids on future jobs."

Curt Dubbin

Today, bore planning software packages are more intuitive and user-friendly. The time to create a bore plan has shrunk dramatically, and the programs provide more information than ever about the bore and pullback. The software helps remove guesswork in determining elevations, and also in estimating the drill pitch for the pilot bore, the mud volume required and how hard the pipe will pull.

MUCH SIMPLER

"These days, a contractor simply needs to gather the topographical elevations and required depth along the bore path, enter the data and hit Plan," says Curt Dubbin, a trenchless solutions specialist with Vermeer. "The software will then produce a rod-byrod plan of your bore."

In the past, it seemed software tools were used only on the larger pipeline bores. That is changing as more contractors working on projects in the midsized range — 24,000 pounds and up — begin to use the tools for on-grade and profile bores.

Another reason for the increased popularity is the need to avoid existing underground facilities. "Bore planning tools can be used to help contractors develop a bore plan that will maintain proper separation distances between underground facilities," Dubbin says.

"This is becoming ever so important as the vast amount of underground infrastructure continues to grow. Many of the software applications also allow users to create a permanent record of the completed bore that can be used as a reference to help generate more accurate bids on future jobs."

VARIED ROLES

There are a number of bore planning programs on the market, and each has a definite role in the planning process. Here is a quick summary of tools available to HDD contractors:

Analysis. Software programs can help contractors and engineers determine whether opencut trenching or HDD is appropriate for the installation. Nine aspects are considered, including customer expectations, contractor's familiarity with technologies, project location, soil sample reports, competitors and risk factors. The software provides a detailed analysis and various considerations for choosing either method and explains the recommendation.

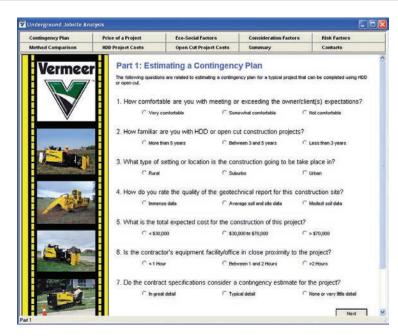
Preplanning. These tools help contractors select the appropriate drill and tooling based on the type of pipe to be installed and the anticipated soil conditions. Contractors can use a pulling load calculator to estimate the required pulling load for a specific HDD project based on the type of pipe, pipe diameter and total bore length. The calculator also recommends the appropriate drill size based on the bore specification entered for the project.

A soil classification guide helps contractors determine the site's soil type and match the appropriate drill bit and backreamer. It also includes a fluid-mixing process map that shows how much mud should be used based on soil conditions, drill unit and tooling used.

Terrain mapping. This software is used in the survey phase where laser systems collect accurate topography and information about existing utilities along the bore route. In most applications, the information can easily be uploaded to the bore planning software.

Bore planning software. Using the data collected in the mapping phase, these programs provide a graphic visualization of the job, helping a crew see and perform the job from start to finish. By choosing drill stem diameter and length, the desired bore path depth, the desired minimum cover, and the diameter and allowable bend radius of the product pipe, the software plots a proposed bore path. The path is provided in two formats: one screen showing a top and side view and the other showing a report that lists the numerical depth and pitch of each drill stem. Once the bore is completed, the actual as-built depths can be entered into the designed profile and a comparison of design versus actual can be graphically shown.

In-field calculations. Any contractor knows things can change once they're in the field, and a number of drill manufacturers also offer hand-held software tools just for those situations. These PDA



Bore planning software packages allow contractors to avoid existing underground facilities and perform other planning functions. Above is an estimating screen from the Atlas Bore Planner software from Vermeer.

devices can calculate setback distances, figure point-to-point bore paths, estimate pullback time and hole volumes, and configure the outside diameters of multiple ducts.

CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

While bore planning software has advanced by leaps and bounds in the past five years, manufacturers are constantly looking for ways to enhance their software packages. The trend is heading to more information.

"We are working to tie all of these applications into one complete package," Dubbin says. "This will provide contractors with more in-depth information and data on proposed and completed bores. The software program will record everything from how hard the drill is working on a bore, to the mud pressures, to the amount of fuel consumed. A contractor will know exactly what happened on the bore and know the cost."

With that kind of data on a project, contractors can increase their knowledge base and more accurately bid projects and manage their businesses. The integration will also make the planning process easier. Rather than jumping from one program to the next and then trying to bring it all back together into a cohesive piece, everything will be available in one place.

"Typically, contractors record data on only larger bores, but just imagine the competitive advantage a small to midsized contractor could have with this type of information," Dubbin says. "It could make a significant impact on their business."

NOT JUST FOR CONTRACTORS

While HDD contractors routinely use bore planning software, engineers are also getting on board. "I receive calls every week from engineers asking about our software programs," Dubbin says. "They



are using these tools to better plan underground installation projects that take into account a directional drill's capabilities."

The software will help engineers limit the risk of designing directional drill projects that are not mechanically feasible. For example, a plan based on too little data may call for a bend radius that is not possible with the pipe chosen or it may propose a machine that is underpowered for the project. In addition, the industry is asking for more on-grade boring, and the software can help engineers develop those projects in a realistic manner.

Furthermore, some communities require a formal plan to be submitted before a project starts. In Canada, an HDD contractor

must submit a formal bore plan on all pipeline projects. Environmental guidelines do not allow for frac-outs on pipeline projects. Contractors must submit a plan that includes estimated mud pressures below ground and must have a plan in place to monitor downhole pressure to avoid potential frac-out situations.

WORD OF CAUTION

Dubbin stresses caution when using bore planning tools, as unforeseen obstacles can always sidetrack a well-planned bore. "You can't see what is happening down in the ground during a bore, so you never know what may happen. There are a lot of variables that a person can't control, so it helps to be prepared."

One factor that can be difficult to prepare for is changing ground conditions. Dubbin encourages drill operators to watch the returns on a pilot bore. The colors provide clues to the type of soil in which they're working. If the returns are brown, then suddenly turn to dark brown, light white or gray, the drill is entering a different soil.

That soil type may require additional mud. For example, a contractor needs to pump three to four times as much mud into clay than into sandier soils, as it takes more force to remove the dirt particles from the hole. This is a condition that bore planning tools cannot predict.

Drilling in rock is also unpredictable, because a 20,000 psi rock drills much differently than a 42,000 psi rock. However, core samples along the bore path can be extracted and factored into the plan. This helps determine, rod-by-rod, when the drill enters and exits unique rock formations.

Bore planning software helps save contractors time and money. More important, it helps account for unforeseen challenges before they become a reality. ${\tt c}$

BORE PLANNING SOFTWARE HAS EVOLVED OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

2020

Over the past decade, bore planning software and its acceptance in the horizontal directional drilling market has continued to evolve. Bore planning software used to be available only on computers and had minimal PDA capabilities. Today, productivity tools like Vermeer Projects are available on smartphones, tablets, utility locating systems and on-rig displays. Also, more contractors are using bore planning software, including many smaller utility contractors. In some cases, utility companies now require bore planning documents before work begins. For many contractors, incorporating planning tools helps their crews operate more efficiently and allows them to provide professional documentation to their customers.

DESIGNING A BORE

According to Cory Mass, sales manager for Vermeer Intelligent Worksite Solutions, bore planning software is being integrated into every step of the drilling process. "Using a smartphone or tablet with a GPS antenna, contractors can walk the anticipated bore path, add points to the plan for existing utilities and then make adjustments from there. It's much easier than it used to be."

ON THE JOB

Once a plan has been reviewed, the bore plan can then be transferred to the HDD onboard display if crews are using a locating system designed to work with their software. With Vermeer Projects, the drill operator can use rod-by-rod information to track progress and any adjustments that were made from the original bore plan.

Also, using a GPS-enabled receiver, the drill locator can note landmarks around the area at the time of the bore to help identify buried utilities in the future. "Over time, things above ground can change dramatically, but what's underground remains unchanged," Mass says. "Capturing the distance between a landmark that is unlikely to change and the utility can help someone find it in the future."

DOCUMENTATION

After the bore is complete, users can compare and update the bore plan with as-built information. "Many utility companies require contractors to provide as-built bore profiles because it will help with future expansions or replacements," Mass says. "As-built information will also help another contractor out as they're planning to install product in the same area."

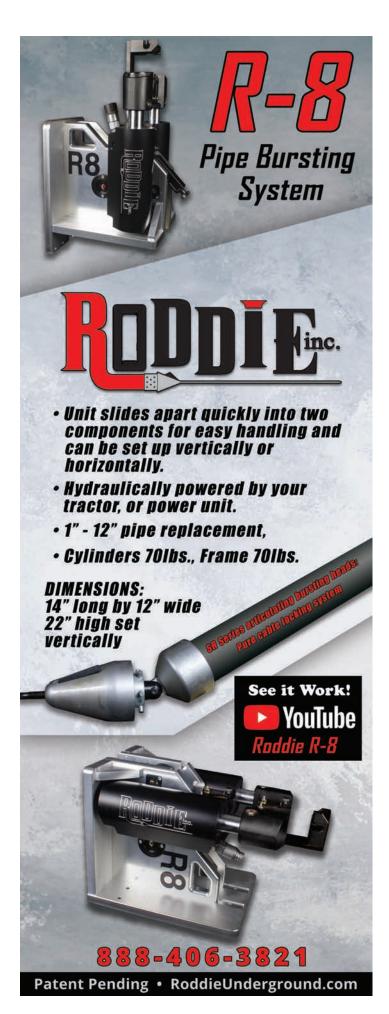
With bore planning software like Vermeer Projects, the information collected during planning and execution can be stored in the system. Having this detailed historical information about what utilities are located where underground can also help reduce the number of utility strikes in the future.

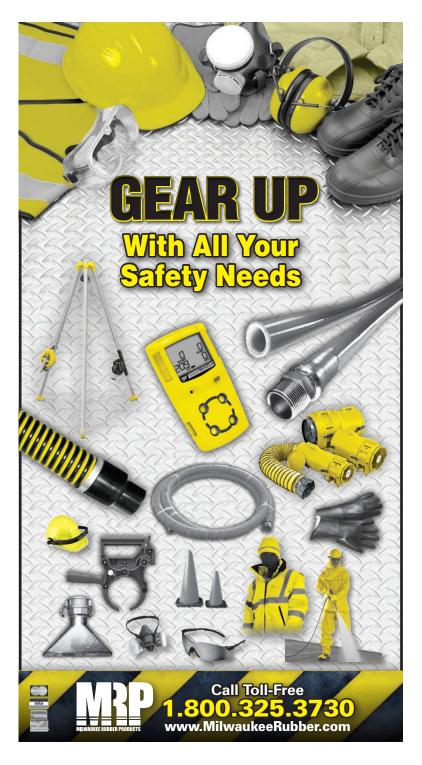
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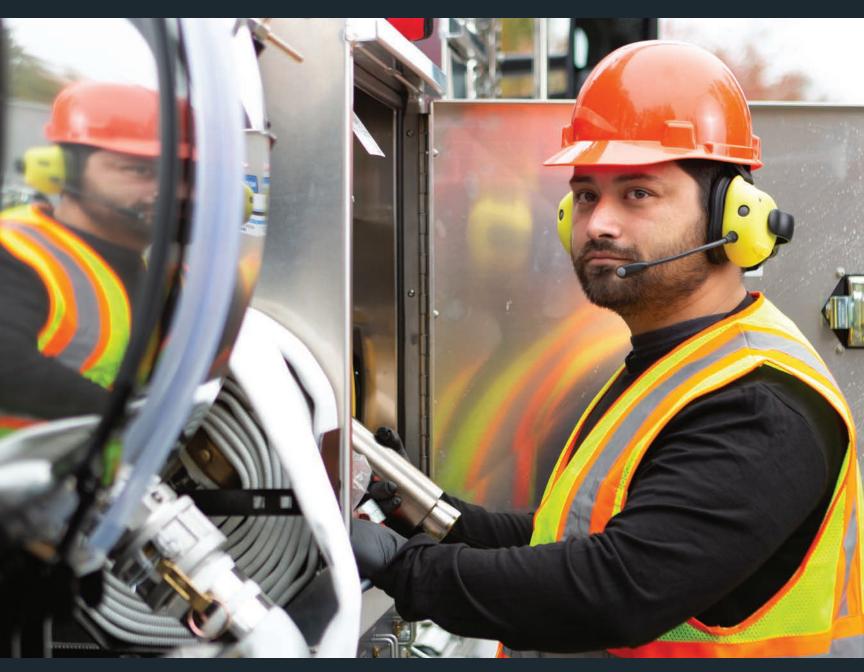








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Get a Better ROI on Your Training Dollars

Training is effective when it is just one part of a larger system of growth and improvement

By Kate Zabriskie

better

ach year, companies waste time and money on training that doesn't deliver what the people who paid for it thought it would. Consequently, many of those remorseful purchasers determine that training has no value to their employees, the instructors don't know what they're doing, the program designers are out of touch with reality or a combination of all three.

If only the root causes of training failures were as simple as those. Even with willing learners, you can still encounter a host of problems that will keep you from realizing strong returns on your training investment. If your training isn't delivering what you think it should, you may be suffering from one of three major problems that plague businesses big and small.

PROBLEM NO.1:

Training isn't part of a larger learning ecosystem

Just because people participate in a workshop, it doesn't mean they will change their behavior back on the job. In fact, even if they demonstrate an ability and willingness to do whatever is being taught while in class, all may be lost once participants exit the classroom.

Why does this happen? Good workshops usually fail to deliver because they are treated as a training solution instead of a component of one. In other words, more training isn't the answer in itself; rather, it should be part of a larger ecosystem.

SOLUTION

Creating a strong learning ecosystem is an ongoing and often complex endeavor. It takes time to build a holistic structure that supports continuous development. That said, start small. For example, ask yourself:



- Prior to training, do you explain to people why they will attend the course and how they are expected to use what's learned after the session?
- Do you explain how the training ties into the bigger picture?
- Are there check-in opportunities after training to ensure participants are implementing new behaviors?

If you answer "no" to any of those questions, do what you need to do to shift those answers to "yes."

Next, think about the incentives you can put in place to encourage behavior changes, the barriers you need to remove to encourage success, and the corrective action you will take if what's happening in the classroom isn't replicated on the job.

Once you start thinking holistically and view training workshops as a component of learning versus learning in its entirety, you will have taken the first step in getting the most out of your training dollars.

PROBLEM NO. 2:

Continuous learning isn't part of the culture, and training isn't treated as a priority

You have great content and a skilled facilitator in place, but half the people attending don't actively participate because training isn't a priority to them.

When training occupies a position of "nice to have" and not "need to have," getting the most from it becomes problematic. This most often happens when people are in survival mode instead of on a growth trajectory. In other words, they are scrambling to get through the work instead of thinking mindfully about the work they're completing and how they're completing it.

In practical terms, if people are always putting out fires and don't regularly ask themselves how they can improve, why should they care about learning new skills?

SOLUTION

Shifting from a reactive culture to one that is deliberate about its activities takes months or even years. However, it's not difficult to make big strides over time when you begin by asking the right questions up, down and across an organization.

Start the improvement conversation at multiple levels and at different times. Frequently ask questions after challenging jobs, meetings, trainings and so forth (e.g., What have we learned? What do we need to do better next time? What do we wish we'd known earlier?). In the rare instances when a project goes perfectly, remember there are still questions to ask: How can we replicate what we just did? Why did that work well? Is there any reason this approach won't work again in the future? And so on. When questioning becomes the norm, the solutions offered via training should have stronger importance and value. For example, if turnover is an issue, you want to know why and may ask several questions: Are we hiring the wrong people? Are we expecting too much? Is there something better for the same money somewhere else? Do our managers not manage well? Do we need to provide people with better tools?

To get larger returns from training, use questioning to drive improvement. The answers will help people connect the dots and understand why training is a priority and not just something they do because you tell them to show up in a classroom.

PROBLEM NO. 3:

Few annual development plans exist

The world doesn't stagnate, and your employees shouldn't either. If they're doing their work the same way they were five years ago and nobody is encouraging or demanding change, why should they care about training or think you care about them?

SOLUTION

Every employee should have a development plan and some learning and growth goals that connect to the big picture and enhance their skills.

"I want to improve X skill to drive Y result, and Z is how I plan to grow," is a quick and easy format to follow when setting development goals, and three to five goals is a good number for most people.

Better still, if you can tie those goals to performance reviews, you'll be amazed at the interest people develop in improvement, training and implementing new skills.

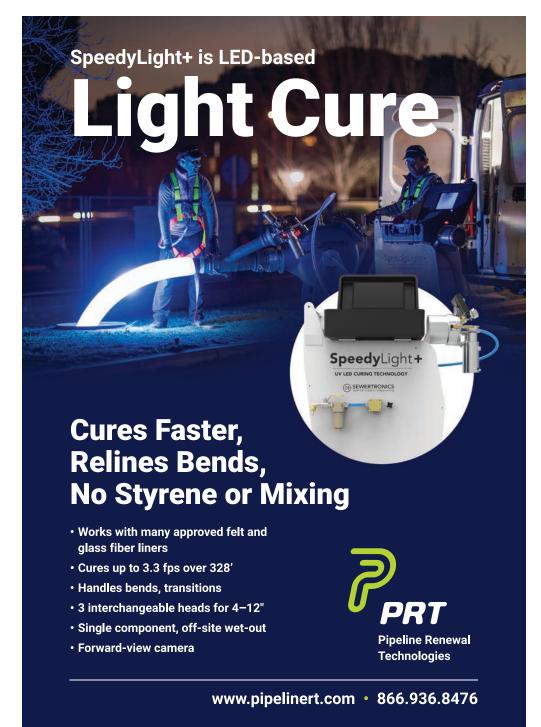
As with the other two solutions, start small.

ACT NOW

Whether you suffer from one, two or all three of the problems described, take action now. When thoughtful goals and development plans are put in place throughout a company, people are conditioned to ask the right questions and drive toward improvement; and when a strong learning ecosystem supports growth, it is almost impossible not to realize a stronger return on your training dollars. **c**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KateZabriskie is the president of Business Training Works Inc., a Marylandbased talent development firm. She and her team help businesses establish customer service strategies and train their people to live up to what's promised. For more information, visit www.businesstrainingworks.com.











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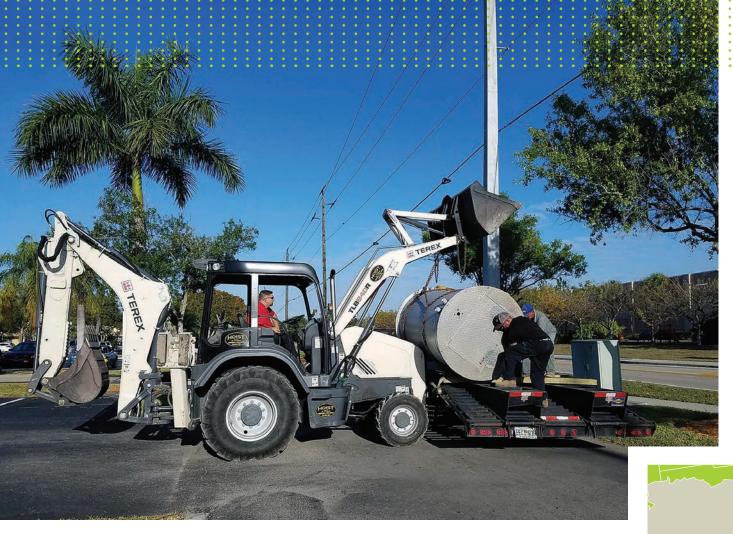


THE GOLDEN RULE

George Garner treats both customers and employees so well that his business can't help but succeed

By Giles Lambertson // Photography by Next Plumbing

When George Garner launched Next Plumbing 10 years ago, he hoped the company wouldn't be *too* successful. Business success, after all, would mean the challenges that come with expanding and retaining a workforce and constantly investing in new equipment.



The team at Next Plumbing does both residential and commercial work, from drain cleaning and pipe replacement to servicing sewer pumps and lift stations.

"We didn't want that. We ran small ads," Garner says, referring to his wife and business partner, Roselyn Garner. "I told her that if we made \$500 a week, we would be good. We didn't have debt. I just didn't want to get back into plumbing. I wanted to enjoy my family."

Garner rather spectacularly failed to avoid success. Today, Next Plumbing has established itself as a premier plumbing house in Fort Myers and across southwest Florida. From a oneman plumbing service shop, it has swelled to a full-service, multilocation enterprise with 24 employees, 20 service trucks and a customer base ranging along the Gulf Coast from Sarasota to Naples.

THE COMEBACK

His reluctance to head up a thriving business was a consequence of experiencing genuine business failure. In 2006, Garner owned five Mr. Rooter franchises, part of a family of independently owned and operated plumbing companies in the U.S. You know what came next: the deep recession, which staggered home and construction trades, including plumbing franchises. A frustrated Garner was forced from his business and, because of a noncompete clause, barred from any plumbing activity for three years. That's a long time for a third-generation plumber to not pick up a pipe wrench or direct a jetter blast into a clogged sewer line. During that time, Garner began to lose his zeal for the craft that was part of his family heritage. The stress of the recession battle left him burnt out.

"I really didn't want to get back into plumbing," he says, "but that's where the money was." When the noncompete period was over, he put some tools in a secondhand van, slapped a Next Plumbing sign on the side of the truck and, with the help of his future wife, got back into business.

From working out of Roselyn's Fort Myers home — where she kept the books and answered the phone — Next Plumbing has grown into an operation with offices in Fort Myers, Sarasota, Cape Coral and Naples. Year after year, the company continues to win accolades from its customers, who keep increasing in number.

Repeat customers represent 93% of Next Plumbing customer calls, according to George Garner. He attributes such loyalty to the company's

- -

Next Plumbing

LOCATION: Fort Myers, Florida OWNER: George Garner

EMPLOYEES: 24 including office staff

SERVICES: Drain cleaning, kitchen and bathroom fixture repairs, piping and repiping, remodeling of plumbing systems, sewer line service, video inspection, water heater repair and service

SERVICE AREA: Southwest Florida, from Sarasota to Naples WEBSITE: www.asknextplumbing.com

Hitting the gym

Of all the reasons to sign on as a plumber with a company, access to a physical fitness center might be quite a ways down the list. Not so at Next Plumbing in Fort Myers, Florida. "If you were to ask our team, they undoubtedly would tell you their favorite benefit of working at Next Plumbing is our gym," says George Garner, company owner.

The gym is not a sweaty little room in the back of the warehouse with a couple of dumbbells and a treadmill. Rather, the \$200,000, two-story, state-of-the-art gymnasium that Garner built for his employees sports \$75,000 worth of cardio and weightlifting machines and 55-inch televisions. The second story takes things to another level: a mixed martial arts training area and arena.

"It's something all the guys wanted," Garner says of the facility. "We took a survey and the No. 1 choice was a gym with showers that they could access 24/7." While there currently are no female plumbers at Next Plumbing, female office personnel also work out there. Personal trainers and dietitians come by weekly to monitor the progress of gym users.

Garner himself is among the gym rats. "I'm in the gym every day," admits the 54-year-old owner, adding that the 250 pounds he carries on his 5-foot, 8-inch frame is firm, not fat. He thus leads his team by example. Some employees come to the gym before starting their workday, others come at more social times and enjoy camaraderie as they work out.

The purpose for the gym goes behind fitness. "We believe in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle because it will lead to a happier and more focused employee," he says. "After building this gym, we've seen a sharp increase in productivity. And it has been very rewarding to see our team become closer."





Next Plumbing crew members dig a trench to replace a wastewater line outside a commercial building.

demonstrated care for each customer. "We do what we say we are going to do. I'm not big on lip service."

Next Plumbing offers virtually every plumbing service out there, though it rarely ventures into new-construction projects mainly because the revenue stream from such work is relatively meager. Septic tank work was shelved after code changes made it unprofitable. Instead, the firm's plumbers roll out of the equipment yard daily and head for service calls at homes, businesses, industrial properties, hospitals and colleges.

"We do what we say we are going to do. I'm not big on lip service." The work varies widely, from servicing sewer pumps in force mains to installing kitchen sinks. Probably 55% of revenue comes from commercial accounts, according to Garner, though 75% of his customers are residential. "Drain cleaning is one of our top service jobs. That's probably the dominant one, but we do big commercial jobs, too — lift stations and stuff. You name it, we do it."

George Garner

Water quality is an issue in Florida, which positively impacts the plumbing industry. The state is divvied up between "very hard" water and "extremely hard" water regions. In response to the waterquality issue, Next Plumbing offers two water filtration systems small reverse osmosis units and more comprehensive whole-home filters. They have become two of the company's most requested products.

Next Plumbing has also developed a popular preventive maintenance program of inspection and service for homeowners. It offers three tiers of programs — silver, gold and platinum. The base plan includes such perks as 15% discounts on repairs, priority responses on nonemergency calls and thorough inspection of a plumbing system every six months. The benefits ratchet on up through the plans to include such things as free hose replacement



The one exception to the company's cross training of employees is use of the large US Jetting trailer jetters. Only specially trained personnel are sent out to clear lines.

and toilet tank overhaul. Some 23,000 of the policies have been sold.

Corrosive water is not the only reason for the popularity of the preventive programs. There's also the signature appeal of Florida as a winter getaway place. "We have a heavy influx of snowbird customers," Garner says, referring to residents of northern states who maintain winter homes in the Sunshine State. "They are part-time customers with our protection plan. A lot of them call us before they come down for the winter or before they leave to head north again."

RETAINING TALENT

Incoming calls for help are answered by what Garner calls an "extremely experienced staff" with 150 years of combined plumbing expertise: Four plumbers have master licenses — including Garner, who has four such licenses from different states. The certificates are not just wallpaper either, he notes, but are keyed to requirements that vary significantly from state to state and genuinely attest to a plumber's expertise.

Though Garner firmly supports a local plumbing apprenticeship program, he has just one apprentice at a time on his team to ensure high-quality work on every call. Thursday training sessions keep all crew members current about tools and techniques, as do regular training meetings with vendors. Backflow certifications from American Society of Sanitary Engineering trainers are de rigueur.

As in the rest of the country, attracting and keeping top-grade tradespeople is a challenge for plumbing companies in southwest Florida.

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Employees participates in "Bring Your Child to Work" days, where the kids get to come see what their parents do at work all day.

Garner has managed to meet that challenge by creating a rather amazing package of benefits, compensation and work policies for his team.

It starts with a guaranteed weekly salary, a 100% companyfunded medical, dental, vision and life insurance plan for each employee, and paid vacations and holidays. A "Golden Handshake" program has management putting aside money for each employee and giving the employee the option of cashing it in after five years. In effect, it's a company-funded savings account to which an employee contributes nothing and wholly controls after five years.

"No one has taken out any money yet," Garner says. The benefit for the company, of course, is that employees are given an incentive to stay aboard for at least five years. In that time, Garner is betting they will find a home at Next Plumbing and elect to remain with the company.

If that isn't enough reason to become a long-term Next Plumbing employee, Garner offers another carrot: partial company ownership. He has pledged to turn over to employees up to 28% of the company as they accumulate seniority. So far, one employee has qualified and become a part owner. "This not only shows our appreciation to our team, but also gives them a stake in what we are all building toward. It provides a career and a retirement plan, not just a job." "I was working for a franchise before I bought my own. They only paid commission and loaded up with employees ... so commissions were low. I said to myself that I would never do that to my guys."

George Garner

Understandably, retention is "very high," Garner says. It all stems from his earlier experience as an employee. "I was working for a franchise before I bought my own. They only paid commission and loaded up with employees — they had 15 guys when they could have gotten by with three — so commissions were low. I said to myself that I would never do that to my guys."

In short, he treats employees like he would want to be treated. "I know what employees think: I am not just a number. And I know what employees want: not to be called out to b.s. jobs in the evening. So, we only take emergency calls after 3 p.m. We stop taking other calls then. I not only want my guys to make \$100,000 a year, I want them to have great relationships with their families."

He gives them the tools to do the job, too, including RIDGID NaviTrack locators and RIDGID K-60 and Gorlitz Sewer & Drain drain cleaning machines. Each of the Isuzu NPR box trucks or Dodge Sprinters in his service truck fleet carries a CCTV video inspection camera, either a RIDGID SeeSnake on a 200-foot cable or a Ratech CONTINUED»



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"On a job, we inspect every line," Garner says, "even when we're not cleaning a drain. Video work is a routine part of our home inspections. One reason we like the cameras is because it takes away the guesswork. People can see for themselves what the problem is." Because Next Plumbing doesn't have a dedicated camera service truck, every serviceman is cross-trained to use the cameras and other equipment.

The sole exception to the crosstraining is large jetters. Only specially trained personnel are sent out to clear lines with the company's Harben ET-180 trailered jetters. The ET-180 can produce up to 4,000 psi and 18 gpm a lot of force for an untrained person to control. "I won't let them take out the big jetters without being qualified, for safety and financial reasons."

The jetters are the largest machines in the Next Plumbing equipment yard. The company does not, for instance, own a compact excavator. "I don't need one here. The soil is mostly sand, and

lines aren't at much depth. I rent one when I need one," Garner says. The absence of large powered machinery means he can maintain his equipment in-house, with the exception of large jetters, which he turns over to a US Jetting service station for maintenance.

GIVING BACK

With its main office on Commerce Lakes Drive in Fort Myers, Next Plumbing adds to its high profile in the community through

 "Video work is a routine part of our home inspections."

One reason we like the cameras is because it takes away the guesswork. **People can see for themselves** what the problem is."

George Garner

« George Garner solders a fitting for a bathroom remodel job.

charity work. Among recipients of its activism is the Fort Myers-based Special Equestrian horseback therapy program that serves disabled adult and youth in four counties of southwest Florida.

The company also reaches overseas in its philanthropy. Last August, the Garners traveled to the islands in the Philippines, Roselyn Garner's heritage country, which they frequently visit. On the trip, they carried along clothes, medicine and several thousand blue or pink book bags after seeing a video of school children walking to school in the rain with their books and papers unprotected.

Other local charities the company supports include Partners for Breast Cancer — Next Plumbing being one of the largest contributors to the organization — and the Wounded Warrior Project for military veterans. Though George Garner is not a veteran, his company prioritizes vets in its hiring.

Garner's son George, who goes by Patrick to avoid confusion, is a veteran. He also is a fourth-generation family member working in the plumbing business, a master license holder and, with three years' tenure, the company's operations manager. Under his leadership, the future for Next Plumbing is expected to include expansion into the Tampa and Orlando markets.

"I like to see myself being phased out," George Garner says, still trying to get out of the plumbing business. **c**

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A Clean Look

money MACHINES

Rhode Island drain company uses new technology to clean and inspect drainlines simultaneously

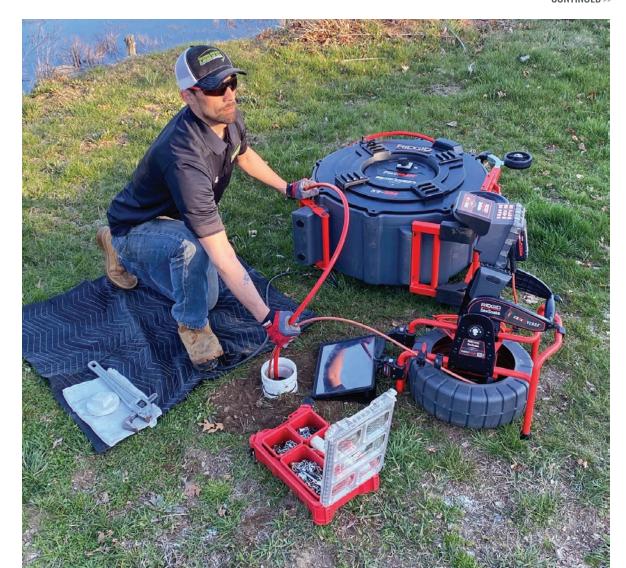
By Ken Wysocky

leaning clogged drainlines used to be a prolonged and tedious job for Rob Broccolo Jr. Most drain cleaners know the drill all too well: Push an inspection camera into a pipe to diagnose the problem. Pull it out. Push in the drain machine cutter for cleaning. Pull it out. Push the camera head back in again to check the progress. Then repeat as many times as necessary.

But the RIDGID series of FlexShaft drain machines — the K9-102, K9-204 and K9-306 — dramatically reduced that timeconsuming process at Professional Drain Services of Southern New England, the company Broccolo owns with his father, Rob Broccolo Sr. The resulting improvements in productivity and perjob profitability offer vivid proof of the drain machines' gamechanging capability.

"We now average four to five drain jobs a day, compared to two or three a day before we bought these machines," says the younger

Broccolo, who established the Westerly, Rhode Island-based company in 2017. The company serves customers throughout CONTINUED»



PROFESSIONAL DRAIN SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND LLC Westerly, Rhode Island

OWNERS: Rob Broccolo Sr. and Rob Broccolo Jr.

MACHINES: RIDGID FlexShaft K9-102, K9-204 and K9-306 drain machines

FUNCTION: Cleaning 11/4- to <u>6-inch-diamet</u>er drainlines

FEATURES: K9-102 weighs about 24 pounds and comes with 50 feet of 1/4-inch-diameter cable. K9-204 weighs around 38 pounds and features 70 feet of 5/16-inchdiameter cable. K9-306 weighs 159 pounds and comes with 125 feet of 3/8-inch-diameter cable and a built-in dolly with four wheels and a telescoping handle. Smaller machines powered by an 18-volt drill: K9-306 powered by an 11/2 hp electric motor (15-amp draw).

COST: Approximately \$880, \$1,320 and \$4,000, respectively **WERSITE:**

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Kob Broccolo Jr. uses a RIDGID K9-306 FlexShaft drain machine and a RIDGID SeeSnake Compact M40 inspection camera equipped with a RIDGID CS6x monitor to remove roots from a 4-inch drainline at a residence. Strong-Seal

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the state, as well as in southeastern Connecticut. "We're definitely knocking out more calls per day."

The productivity gains stem from the units' design. First of all, the K9-102 (for 1 1/4- to 2-inch-diameter pipes) and K9-204 (for 2- to 4-inch pipes) weigh in at 24 and 38 pounds, respectively. Broccolo says they're much easier to move around than heavy drum machines.

Even the K9-306 (designed for 3- to 6-inch pipes), which weighs 159 pounds, is a relative lightweight compared to bigger and more cumbersome drum and sectional drain machines. And it comes with a built-in dolly — including a telescoping handle — that can be rolled on two or four wheels.

TWO JOBS AT ONCE

What really drives productivity is the machines' cable design. The cable is enclosed within a flexible nylon sheath that prevents it from spinning wildly inside a pipe. (The sheath diameter is 3/8, 1/2 and 5/8 inches in diameter for the K9-102, K9-204 and K9-306 machines, respectively.)

By eliminating the cable gyrations, technicians can safely insert an inspection camera behind the drain machine's cleaning head without risk of damage. As such, technicians can effectively perform both cleaning and inspecting at the same time.

To inspect pipelines, Professional Drain Services owns three RIDGID SeeSnake cameras — a Compact M40, microReel and Mini reel — plus a RIDGID CS6x Versa monitor.

"I was amazed when I first saw the technology at a WWETT Show three years ago," Broccolo says. "Now these machines are the first thing I pull off the truck for jobs. And nine times out of 10, I'm also finishing the jobs with them.

"It brings so much more value when customers can see the problem on a camera monitor. They can watch me remove a clog while I explain what's going on. Plus, now I can get in and out of jobs in about 45 minutes, compared to around 1 1/2 hours minimum before.

"Before I was just a drain cleaner. Now I'm a guy with efficient, modern equipment who's a drain surgeon. My customers love it."

Broccolo says he still uses a JM-3080 cart jetter from General Pipe Cleaners for longer runs on commercial jobs, as well as a RIDGID K-5208 sectional machine for really tough root clogs.

POWERFUL MACHINES

The K9-102 and K9-204, which max out at 2,500 rpm, are powered by an 18-volt power drill. That might lead some drain cleaners to question the units' strength, but Broccolo says he's never lacked for power. "I've cut through some pretty crazy root clogs that were 10 to 12 feet long," he notes. "And the FlexShafts ate right through them like they were nothing.

"That's pretty impres-

sive because it's hard to drive a bigger cable machine through that much root. In the nearly two years I've owned the K9-102 and K9-204, I've never broken a cable or been unable to get through a clog."

"Before I was just a drain cleaner. Now I'm a guy with efficient, modern equipment who's

a drain surgeon.'

Rob Broccolo Jr.

Broccolo recently purchased a K9-306, which is powered by a 1 1/2 hp electric universal motor that generates 2,000 rpm. He primarily uses it for descaling cast iron pipes and root removal. In terms of durability, he says he's run the motor (which draws 15 amps) for up to an hour straight with no issues.

"It has a forward and a reverse switch, which is great when you're descaling cast iron pipes because you can penetrate going forward and clean in reverse coming back."

The K9-102 includes a 50-foot-long, 1/4-inch-diameter cable; the K9-204 features 70 feet of 5/16-inch cable; and the K9-306 offers 125 feet of 3/8-inch cable. Each machine comes with two chain knockers.

GREAT RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Broccolo also says the FlexShafts easily move through the exterior P-traps, where the sewer lateral exits a house, that are commonly installed on homes in his service area. With other drain machines, getting a spinning cable and cutter head through these kinds of traps is next to impossible.

But the FlexShafts' cable and chain knocker can be engaged on demand. As a result, he can send the cable and chain knocker through a trap in nonspin mode, then engage the cable and knocker when they clear the trap. "The cable sheath is very flexible, and the chains don't engage until you want to spin them."

With price tags of approximately \$880, \$1,320 and \$4,000 from the smallest to largest machines, respectively, Broccolo believes the FlexShafts are a great value and says they quickly pay for themselves.

"The return on investment is no joke," he says. "I can make so many more calls a week, so I'm definitely making a lot of money with these machines." c

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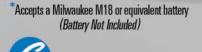


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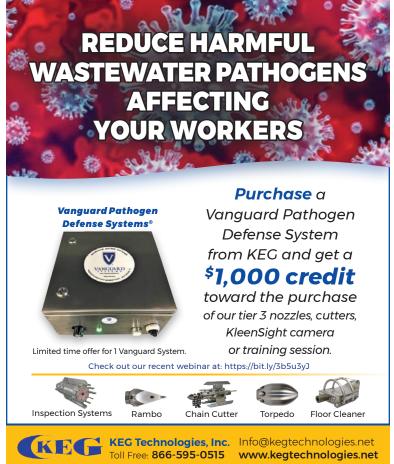


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Meeting Expectations

A commitment to safety requires actively seeking employee involvement, and it starts from the top down

By Giles Lambertson

here are many workplace safety mantras, such as "safety is a habit" and "safety is everyone's business." While there is truth in the maxims, they nevertheless are just words — and cheap, as they say. Danger arises when the words become substitutes for the work of actively teaching safety and monitoring a workplace for unsafe situations.

It's the job of safety managers to move a company beyond just talking about safety — and that job is a tough one. A safety manager's very worth to a company ultimately is measured by how many accidents or injuries do not happen on his or her watch.

Safety personnel may have different approaches to their work, but all seem to agree that the most insidious cause of unsafe behavior

is routine, and how important it is for everyone to be committed to returning home unharmed at the end of a workday.

START FROM THE TOP

"I'm the safety manager," says Chris Ravenscroft of Koberlein Environmental. What's interesting about that is Ravenscroft is also president and owner of the diversified wastewater services firm in Pennsylvania with commercial, residential, industrial and municipal clients. Considering all the responsibilities that come with ownership and administration of a burgeoning company, delegating employee safety to a subordinate certainly could be justified.

But Ravenscroft's decision to be directly involved in the company's safety program reflects his fundamental belief that the integrity of the program determines its success. "I really do think that it all has to do with credibility," he says. "Management and ownership have to show their genuine interest in what employees have to say.

"Employees come to the monthly safety committee meetings with their own ideas and concerns and we have an open forum. Their active participation starts with the belief that we're having a meaningful discussion. They have to see that we really are concerned about their safety."

Daily operations of the company occasionally interfere with assembling a safety committee quorum. For the meeting to occur, at least four committee members besides management representatives are required to be present. That requirement alone serves to validate the meeting in the eyes of employees. They can see their presence at

the meeting truly is valued.

The meetings are not allowed to drone on either, Ravenscroft says. "Realistically, we try to keep them as short as possible and as long as necessary. That means usually about 45 minutes. After that much time, everyone's attention starts to wander. There are diminishing returns after 45 minutes."

While each meeting has an agenda, urgent topics are raised as determined by circumstances, he says, including accidents. The company has gone several years without a lost-time accident, but incidents do happen from time to time.



<image>

The key to having meaningful and productive safety meetings is giving employees the opportunity to speak their minds, share experience and express concerns.

"Whenever an accident does occur or a near miss of an accident, it definitely focuses people. Such incidents go to the top of our agenda."

He adds that sometimes committee members respond to an incident "sooner than the next month's regularly scheduled meeting. We sometimes call a special meeting or decide to act on something immediately and follow up at the next meeting. These meetings are not window dressing. The safety committee is not a token or a gesture."

One indicator that management means business in stressing safety is how readily it will pay for it. Ravenscroft says: "There has to be a willingness to consider real solutions based on employee input. Sometimes this includes spending money. There has to be a willingness to make the investment for safety."

SAFETY IS A CULTURE

As safety manager of North American Pipeline Services (NAP), John Flanagan brings to the table hands-on experience keeping workers safe: He spent years in the oil refinery industry where, he says, "safety is huge." Leading a refinery crew of 40 workmen, Flanagan each day stressed to employees the necessity of working safely and looking out for one another.

"It was easy to do that then because everyone met in the construction trailer every morning. Here, everyone is scattered to different workplaces," he says. The scattering comes from NAP being a full-service underground utility rehab and repair contractor serving customers in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

A year ago, safety became Flanagan's sole focus after Tom Mullen, NAP owner, hired him to enhance the company's environment. Flanagan says the new program is a work in progress. "Tom asked me to enhance the company's safety culture while he continues to grow the company. Safety is a culture. We're still developing it."

Flanagan's first undertaking was to develop a health and safety manual. "It tells employees what they can expect the company to do for them and what the company expects of them to help protect themselves and each other."

Flanagan also began to hold monthly safety meetings with individual groups of employees. Topics include hand safety, eye protection, the dangers of hydrogen sulfide gas in manholes and confined-space entry procedures. Eventually, that gathering of employees will become a monthly safety committee meeting with a representative from each division of the company.

He recently held a "refresher" meeting: a classroom gathering he convenes every six months for half of the employees. The other half has their next scheduled safety awareness refresher a few months later. "It's an eight-hour course," Flanagan says. "I'm not teaching it. I call in a certified trainer to lead a discussion on a safety topic for one whole day." "I really do think that it all has to do with credibility. Management and ownership have to show their genuine interest in what employees have to say."

Chris Ravenscroft

While topics are thoughtfully chosen, sometimes they are dictated by what's in the news — such as a workplace accident. One example: A confined-space incident in a neighboring state where hydrogen sulfide gas killed a worker and two would-be rescuers. The tragedy captured everyone's attention and became a springboard for discussion.

"There always is something happening somewhere, some sort of accident," Flanagan says. "And the biggest reason for accidents is the repetitiveness of every job. The danger is complacency. That's what we have to guard against. Don't take safety for granted. Every day. That's what I tell employees. All accidents are preventable."

INVOLVE EVERYONE

Kyle Irwin got into the safety business the old-fashioned entrepreneurial way: As president of an employment company, he witnessed a less-than-satisfactory safety management performance at a job site in 2009 and believed he could do a better job of it. So, he started his own firm, Irwin's Safety. Today, the Calgary, Alberta, enterprise operates from eight offices scattered throughout the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia.

The 39-year-old founder leads a program that teaches safety online, on site and in instructor-led classrooms with simulated workplace environments. In respect to meeting length and frequency, Irwin counsels company safety specialists to hold 20-minute meetings if they are scheduled weekly and to limit monthly meetings to an hour or less.

"Weekly meetings are especially valuable if employees are involved in an ongoing project because things can happen on a weekly basis, particularly if multiple subcontractors are employed," he says. "But if you are routinely operating ... a monthly thing is OK."

He says safety committees should be comprised of labor, supervisory and management personnel. In every case, a meeting's agenda should include an "old business" section to ensure that safety recommendations actually were implemented after a prior meeting. "You need to make sure you resolve any questions employees have. If you put a safety practice in place and it's not enforced, employees come to believe you are just doing it for paperwork. They don't believe you actually care."

Irwin also believes in teaching from shared experience, that is, periodically having "safety moments" keyed to a workplace incident somewhere. "It can be a good thing to mention in a meeting that, not too far away at another company, an employee was, for example, working in a confined space and died from heat stroke. Make the example as relevant as possible."

CONTINUED >>

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The universality of such a workplace episode is the lesson there: A reminder that working routine can be deadly. "For people who are pretty confident in their performance of a job, this is a way to remind them to take a step back every single time they start to work. It's a way to tell them that just because they've been doing a "It can be a good thing to mention in a meeting that, not too far away at another company, an employee was, for example, working in a confined space and died from heat stroke. Make the example as relevant as possible."

Kyle Irwin

job for a long time doesn't mean they shouldn't take a step back daily and make sure they are proceeding safely. A safety moment in a meeting can help them do that."

The key to having lively and meaningful safety meetings, Irwin says, is management giving employees the opportunity to tell what's on their minds. "Provide feedback opportunities," he says. "People like to talk. They like to feel that they are making a difference. Create that open and welcoming environment and you will get employee engagement big time." **c**



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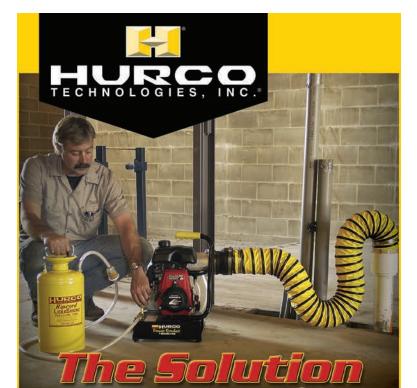
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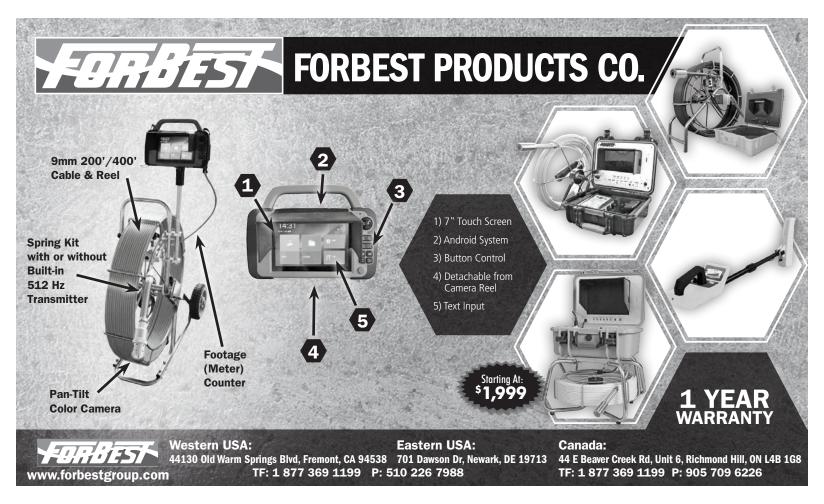
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SPOTLIGHT UV technology speeds up CIPP projects

By Craig Mandli

Quick-curing technology has made completing CIPP projects significantly more efficient. One new technological offering for this service is Pipeline Renewal Technologies' SpeedyLight+,



an LED-based UV solution for CIPP that cures at speeds ranging from 0.66 to 3.3 feet per minute.

Because it's compatible with felt (and invertible glass fiber), SpeedyLight+ can cure 90-degree bends in lines as small as 4 inches, as well as other challenging geometries like transitions and verticals. Because it doesn't use styrene and amines, UVbased cure technologies like SpeedyLight+ raise fewer odor objections from the public and your crew. LED UV curing is also less disruptive to communities because it requires a smaller footprint when performing trenchless repairs, with no large trailers or trucks blocking roadways. In addition, the process requires little time and is energy efficient.

"This can be done in an hour, compared to days of interruptions and sidewalk tear-ups — and then the reconstruction," says Steve Webster, Pipeline Renewal Technologies' channel development manager. "With your typical steam or hot water, when you start curing, it's like a fuse: It goes to the very end, and you have no control. So if there's something wrong in the middle, there's no stopping it."

The single-part vinyl ester resin requires no mixing and eliminates shelf life and working time challenges. According to Webster, any extra resin can be saved for future use. "With this, you can turn the light on and off anytime you want to stop the cure and start the cure," he says.

The technology uses LED lamps to cure, drawing half the power of traditional UV technology without sacrificing intensity. Meanwhile, the SpeedyLight+ camera head is able to show operators what's happening underground every step of the way, giving them the ability to control the speed and accuracy of the curing process.

The highly portable design allows for access from even the most remote sites, curing up to 328 feet of liner in pipes ranging from 4 to 12 inches. Due to the low power of LED technology, a SpeedyLight+ UV LED system can be powered from standard 220-volt mains or any 1.2-kW electrical source. **866-936-8476**; www.pipelinert.com.



ELECTRIC EEL ECAM ACE PIPELINE INSPECTION CAMERA

Two new standard features were added to Electric Eel's Ace inspection camera. A battery cradle installed on the hub of the reel will accept a Milwaukee Tool M18 or equivalent battery (battery not included). This allows for operation in remote locations or anywhere electricity is not available. The Ace camera can run six to seven hours on battery power. Also, 6-inch wheels are now built into the frame for easy transport of the unit. **800-833-1212**; www.electriceel.com.

MILWAUKEE TOOL CABLE DRIVE ASSEMBLY

Milwaukee Tool's new accessory, Cable Drive, for the M18 Fuel Switch Pack sectional drum system provides the ability to automatically feed and retract cables through 1 1/4- to 4-inch lines at up to 15 to 20 feet per minute. The assembly quickly attaches to any Switch Pack drum with the mounting plate installed. A twist lock feature allows the Cable Drive to be easily swapped between drums, meaning only one Cable Drive is needed for all the Switch Pack drums. A ratcheting lever automatically adjusts for Milwaukee Tool 5/16-, 3/8- and 1/2-inch inner core drain cleaning cables and 5/8-inch open wind cables. The assembly is equipped with a Rapid Stop button that releases the steel bearings to provide a quick way to release the cable once a blockage is reached, preventing the cable from binding. 800-729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com.

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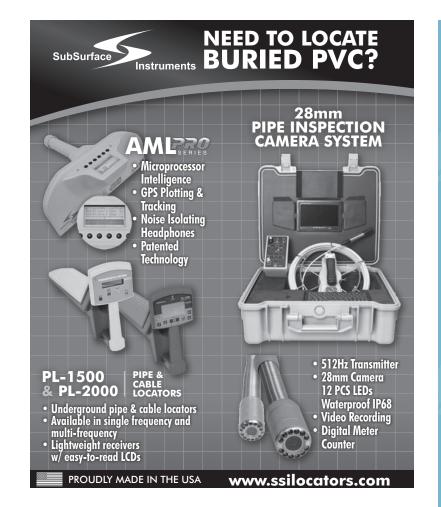
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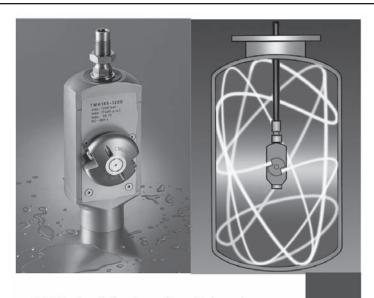
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Vacuum Truck Rentals welcomes Calhoun

Vacuum Truck Rentals announced Donald Calhoun as the newest member of its sales team. He will serve the Deer Park, Texas, region and brings more than 32 years' experience in the vacuum truck and heavyequipment industry. Calhoun began his career as a mechanic's assistant and expanded



Donald Calhoun

his industry skills as a sales representative for parts and used equipment before transitioning into a role to train others on the operation of vacuum trucks.

TRUVAC partners with Ditch Witch in Colorado and Oklahoma

TRUVAC by Vactor announced the addition of two Ditch Witch dealers to its network. Ditch Witch of the Rockies, which is located in Colorado, and Ditch Witch of Oklahoma will now be offering the full line of TRUVAC vacuum excavators. The addition of the two dealers brings the total number of locations providing TRUVAC vacuum excavators and support to more than 87 across the U.S. and Canada.

Radiodetection announces collaboration with Sensors & Software

Radiodetection announced the expansion of its utility-locating offering to include Sensors & Software's LMX range of groundpenetrating radar systems in a new collaboration that utilizes the strengths of both companies. The LMX range of ground-penetrating radar will be available exclusively through Radiodetection in the U.S.

SAERTEX multiCom to expand operations in North Carolina

SAERTEX multiCom plans to invest more than \$20 million in a new manufacturing and warehouse facility near its current location in Huntersville, North Carolina. The expansion will retain 34 existing positions and allow SAERTEX multiCom to add 45 new jobs over the next five years. SAERTEX multiCom has been operating in Mecklenburg County since 2009.

Pipe Lining Supply adds a new technical representative

Pipe Lining Supply hired Steve Maszczak for the technical representative position serving the Northeastern U.S. He brings more than 10 years of CIPP experience to Pipe Lining Supply. He started as a CIPP technician, moved to a CIPP foreman and worked in sales and project



Steve Maszczak

management for the past seven years. Maszczak will support the company's customer base with training, advice and sales for CIPP lateral lining and AIPPR pipe coating projects for drain, waste and vent in Pennsylvania and surrounding states.

Vacuum Truck Rentals welcomes Rose

Vacuum Truck Rentals announced Ty Rose as the manager of its Northeast operations including New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maryland and the surrounding region. He brings 21 years' experience in the vacuum truck and heavy-equipment industries, having served in senior leadership positions, sales and technician roles. Rose began his career in the sawmill industry before becoming a vacuum truck operator and service technician. He then oversaw vacuum truck rental operations for 10 branches before taking a general manager position and served as a vice president of fleet and vacuum operations.

HOBAS Pipe USA announces personnel changes

HOBAS Pipe USA made a few personnel announcements. Edward "Ed" Kocurek is stepping down as president and CEO. Kocurek had served the company for nearly 34 years in a variety of roles. He has presided as president and CEO of HOBAS Pipe USA for the past 20 years. Martin Dana, who joined the HOBAS Pipe management team as vice president of sales in January 2018, has been promoted to the position of president and CEO, effective April 1. The company also announced Keithe Merl,

P.E., as the newest member of the HOBAS Pipe

USA sales team. He will serve the Northeast

U.S., including New York, New Jersey,

Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode

Island. He is a professional geoengineer with

more than 20 years' experience serving clients

in the private, public and municipal sectors in

the Northeastern U.S. Merl replaces John Mele,

who has been promoted to the newly created

position of national business development



Edward "Ed" Kocurek



Martin Dana



Keithe Merl

ACPA announces new vice president of marketing

manager for HOBAS Pipe USA.

The American Concrete Pipe Association announced Michael Kremer as vice president of marketing, a newly created position to advance the association's efforts to meet the United States' critical need for resilient and sustainable infrastructure. In this new role, Kremer will lead

the development and implementation of the organization's marketing strategy, messaging and materials that support the association's strategic mission and industry objectives. **c**



Michael Kremer

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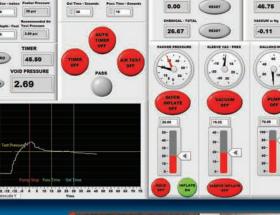
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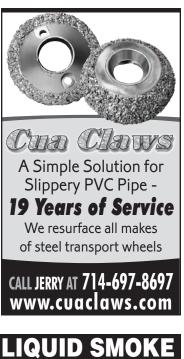
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