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ON THE COVER

Blu-John's Tom Schenderlein washes down a bank of restrooms near its Cumming, Ga., home base. The company is part of rapidly growing global service provider ADCO International and its U.S. division ADCO Holdings. (Photography by Harris Hatcher)

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 PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR

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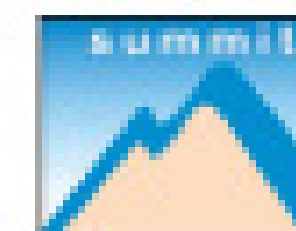











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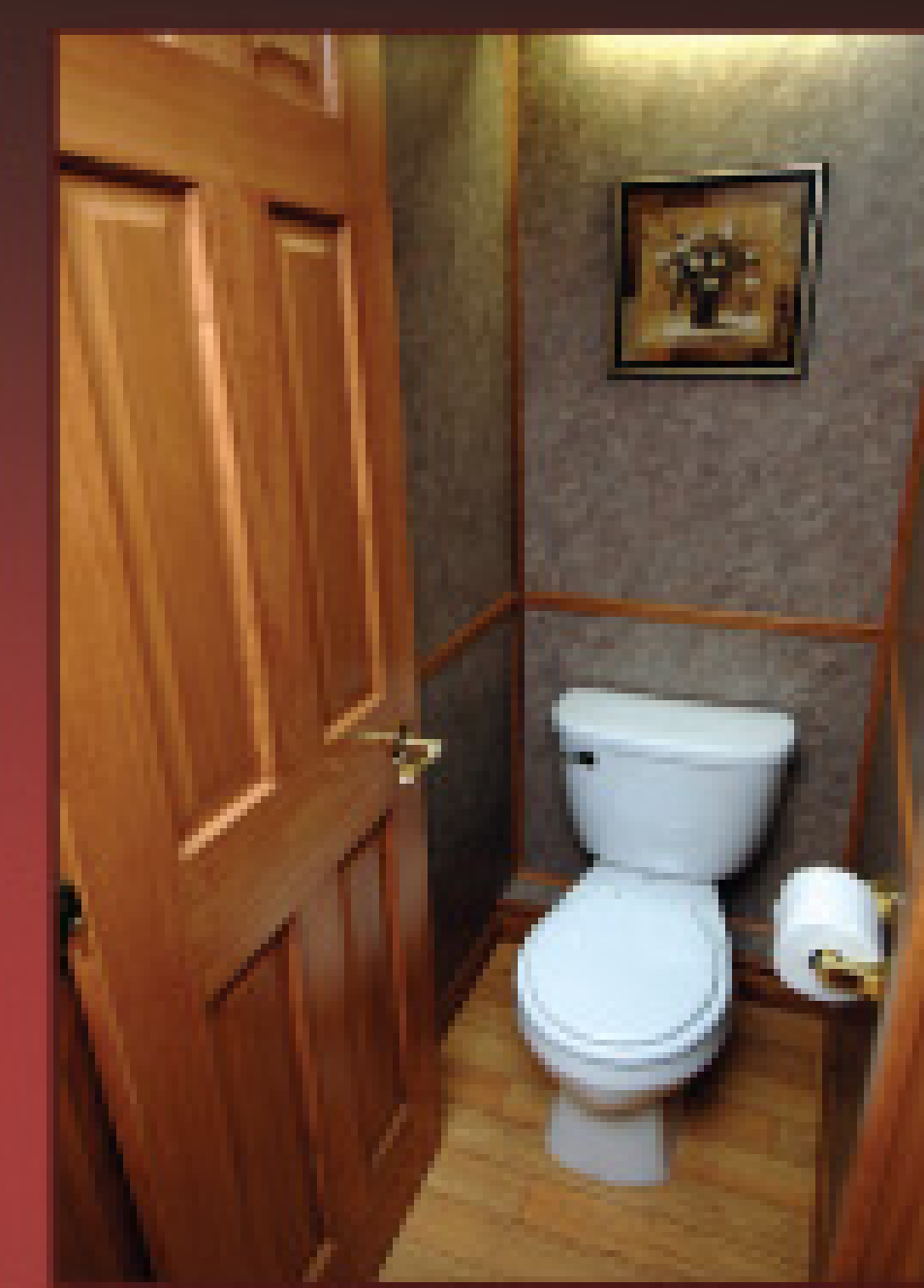
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- **PROfile:** PRO raises the portable sanitation bar in Brazil

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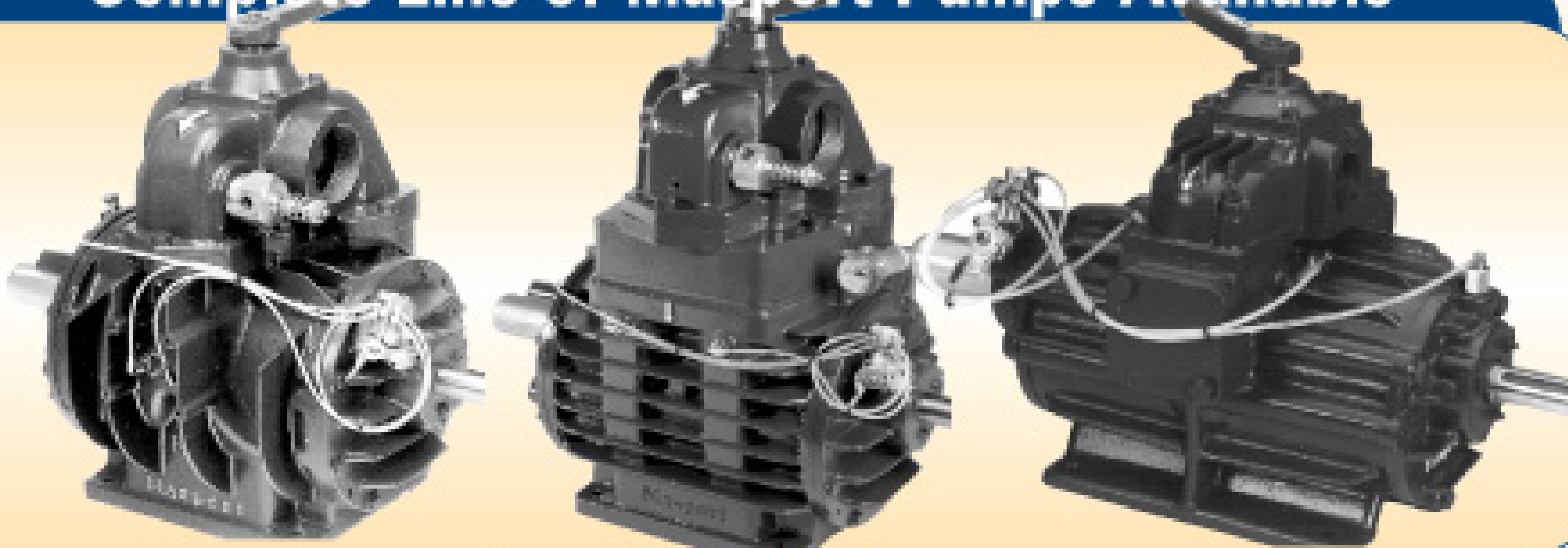
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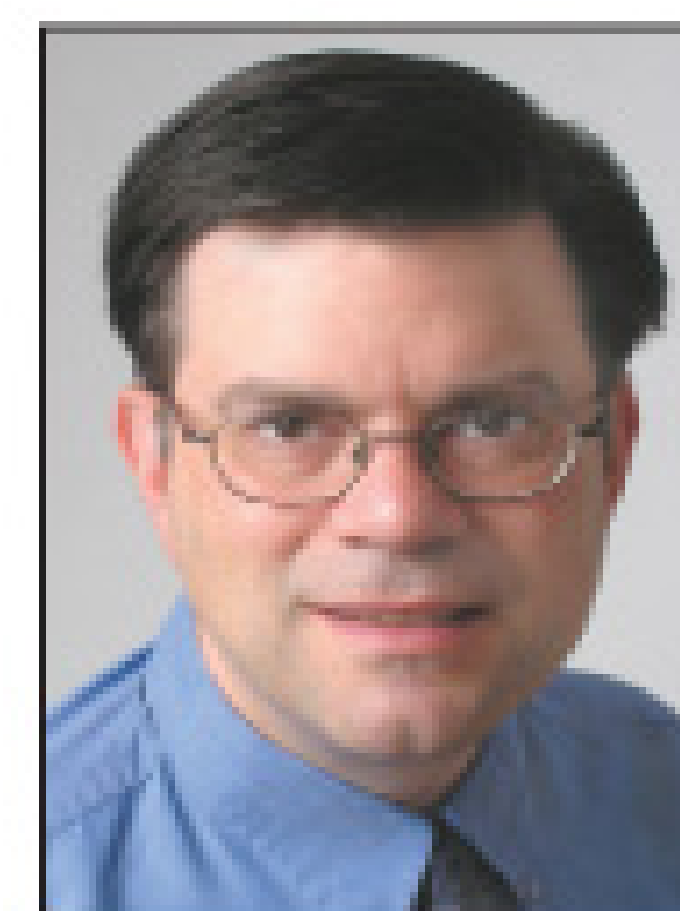
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Culling the Inventory, One Unit at a Time

Why not add the option of selling surplus portable restrooms to single-unit customers?

By Jim Kneiszel

I edited a story for PRO the other day in which a portable sanitation contractor said he occasionally runs an ad in the local newspaper offering to sell off some of his older units. He sells a few restrooms when he's preparing to update his inventory.

The contractor remarked that people who call about the ad are always surprised to find out they could buy a restroom. They have a perception that a portable restroom is something that can only be owned by a service company. This left the PRO scratching his head, wondering where they got that impression. Maybe it's because you never see portable restrooms for sale at the local Wal-Mart.

I've seen this phenomenon myself. Since I started editing this magazine, I've had several conversations with friends and acquaintances for whom it was a revelation to hear they could own a restroom. They could see how this would be handy for their summer cottage, for instance, or to place poolside in their back yards.

OFFER A CHOICE

Some PROs I've talked to have determined there are two ways to make money with single restroom placements. Especially if they're trying to unload some older units, they've decided to let the customer make the choice: Lease a unit by the month or buy a unit and pay for regular service. I don't know how much of a financial difference the choice makes, ultimately, for either the customer or the PRO. The bill may be similar in the long run, but I think it's an interesting idea to give the customer a choice.

Why?

Because consumers prefer to buy many things rather than rent them, even if renting makes more sense. Whether it's the roof over our heads or a specialized home improvement tool, Americans seem to prefer to buy rather than rent. I'll give you an example:

Every few years I notice that my lawn is encroaching on the sidewalk, and in order to keep pace with my finicky neighbors, I need to cut a clean edge in the sod. So I go to the equipment rental area at my local hardware store, give them \$24 and borrow a gas edger for a few hours. It works for me.

But, chewing the fat with the hardware store guy, I noted that several rental edgers are always sitting in the corner, cleaned up and ready to go. He explained that many people prefer to buy a \$300 edger that they will use once or twice a year rather than rent one for \$24. It doesn't make any sense, he said, to buy, store and maintain the edger, but people still do it.

Not everyone, I tell him as I leave with the edger. And he agrees. But as a good businessman, he knows that he'll get more business by offering both options: the \$300 edger on the sales floor and the \$24 edger on the rental floor.

BUYING MIGHT MAKE SENSE

As the summer comes to a close, I am pondering a situation where I might consider buying a portable restroom rather than renting one.

My family owns a cottage on a small lake in northern Wisconsin. Occasionally, maybe a few times a summer, visitors take a swim on the nice sandy beach. Big groups of excited kids have a tendency to track sand into the house on the way to the bathroom. The dirt, as well as the stress on our septic system,

makes me think that a portable restroom would be a handy thing to have on the property.

But do I want to lease one by the month when usage would be so infrequent? No, in this case, I think buying — and getting one or two services a year — might be a practical answer.

Being involved in this industry, I realize I might be able to

pick up a no-frills used restroom for a couple hundred bucks. But I'm one in 100,000 cabin owners who have access to that information. I can't help but think many homeowners — especially in resort areas or families with septic systems that get a lot of company — would welcome the choice to own their own portable restroom.

GET THE WORD OUT

But how do you reach potential buyers? An easy idea would be to make purchasing an option whenever you rent a single unit.

If a mom calls and says she's having a big poolside party on the weekend and would like a restroom, ask her if she has parties often, or if overuse of the toilets in the house is an occasional concern. Then tell her she can buy a unit and place it next to the cabana, then call you for service whenever she wants, or you could put her on, for example, a quarterly service schedule.

If you sell her the unit, she's more likely to keep calling you back whenever she needs service. She will be hesitant to call another service company, thinking other companies wouldn't

I can't help but think many homeowners — especially in resort areas or families with septic systems that get a lot of company — would welcome the choice to own their own portable restroom.

want to service units they didn't lease. If your territory has aggressive competitors who often lower prices to capture more business, it would be good to be locked in with customers who bought units from you and feel extra loyalty.

Advertising is another obvious route to reach buyers. If you're in a resort area, target the local newspapers, post ads on grocery store bulletin boards, consider local tourism publications. If you work in a rural to suburban area, target farming publications or local shopper newspapers.

If you opt to sell a unit, make sure you get an adequate return. Even if the unit's seen better days, you shouldn't give it away. Give some thought to how much you should charge for a used unit, making sure the sale helps offset the cost of the new unit that replaces it in your inventory. If you decide to sell a new or newer unit on occasion, only do it if you're going to turn a decent profit or obtain a profitable service agreement along with the sale.

Especially in a tougher economy, business owners who offer more choices to consumers will capture a greater share of the limited revenue opportunities. Like my local hardware store owner with the lawn edgers, you might benefit from offering customers the option of leasing or buying a restroom.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

When I saw a sign (see the accompanying photo) recently in a vault toilet at a county park campground, I had a good chuckle. From the scary tales several of you have told me about pumping campground toilets, I had to wonder if a polite sign like this would stop users from dropping any manner of foreign object into the pit.



Does this sign posted inside the vault toilets at a county park campground in Wisconsin deter people from dropping foreign objects in the holding tank?

When I've asked PROs about the job they dread most, pumping park vault toilets is often at the top of the list. There's nothing like wedging a bottle or a heavily waterlogged diaper halfway up the vacuum hose to turn a good day to bad. I have no personal experience to prove it, but I'll take your word for it.

When I saw this sign hanging over the toilet, I paused a moment in my vacation camping trip to pay tribute to the unlucky, unnamed PRO who had this remote park on his pumping route. ■

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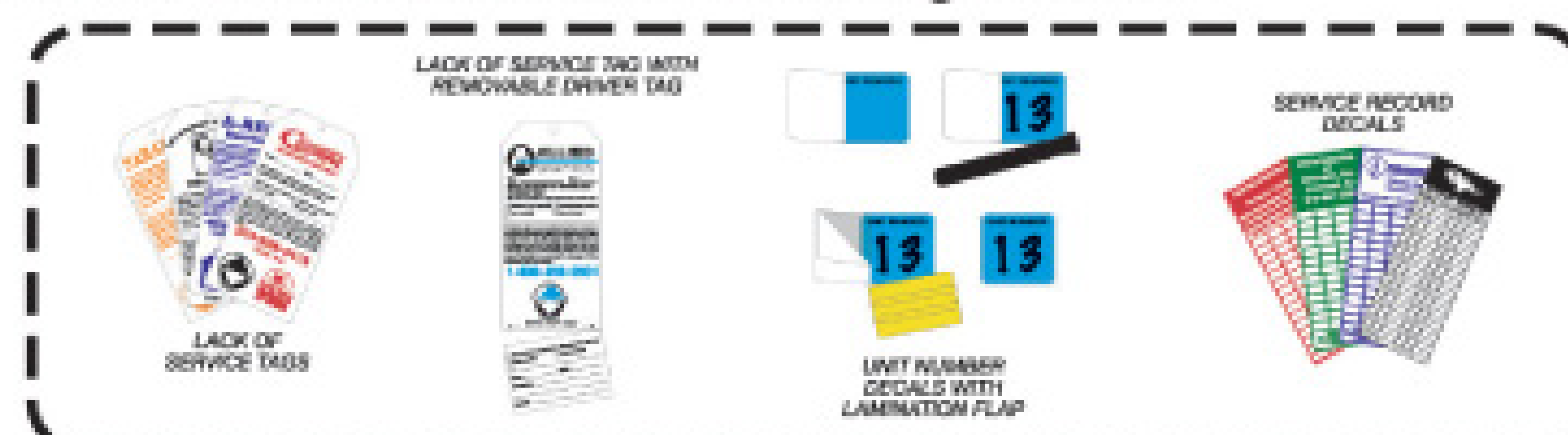
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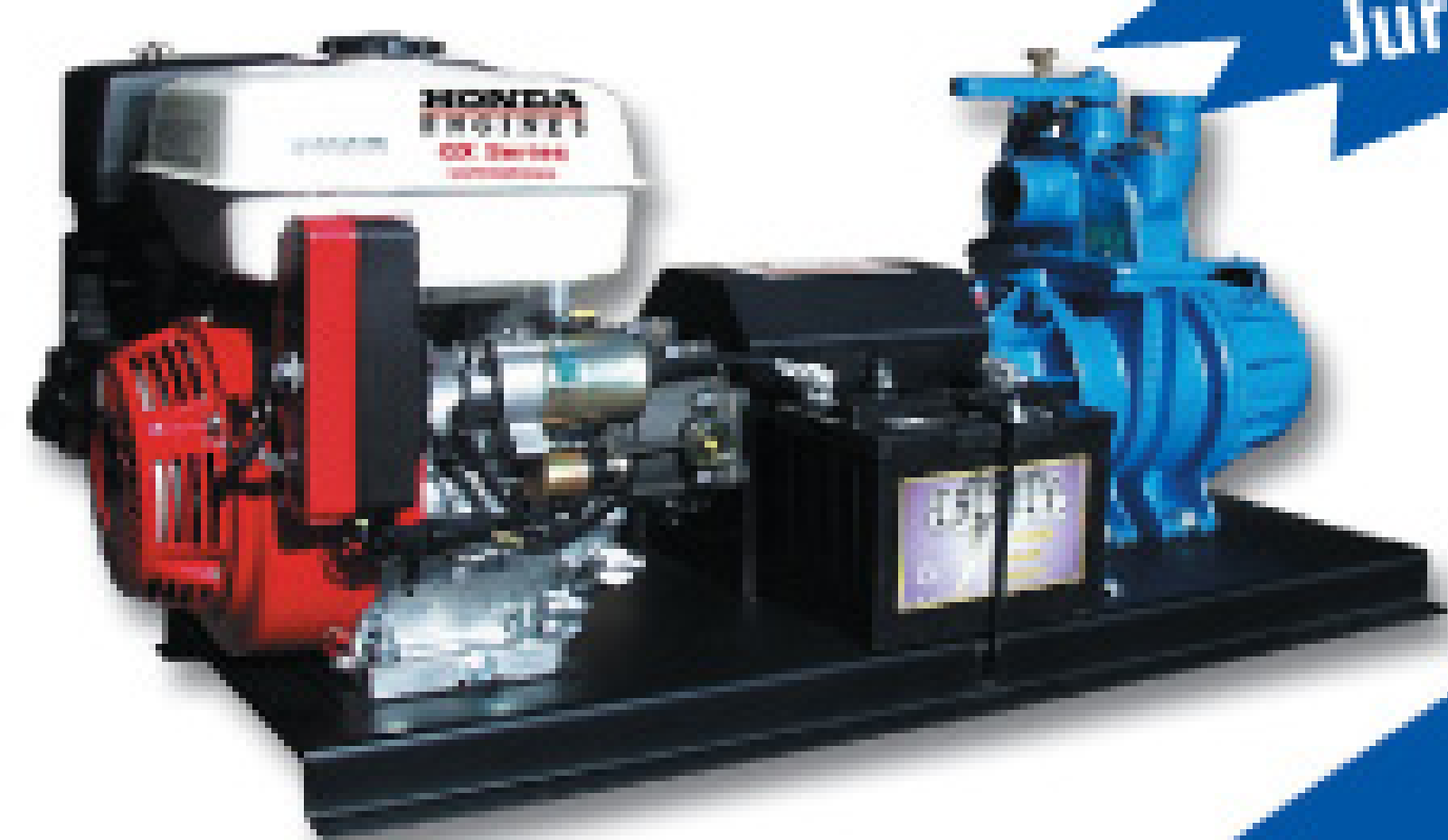
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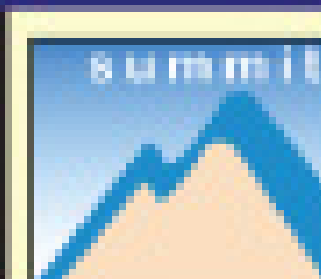
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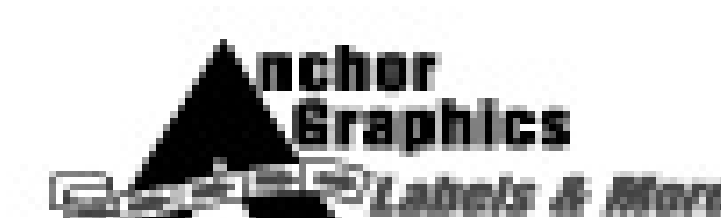
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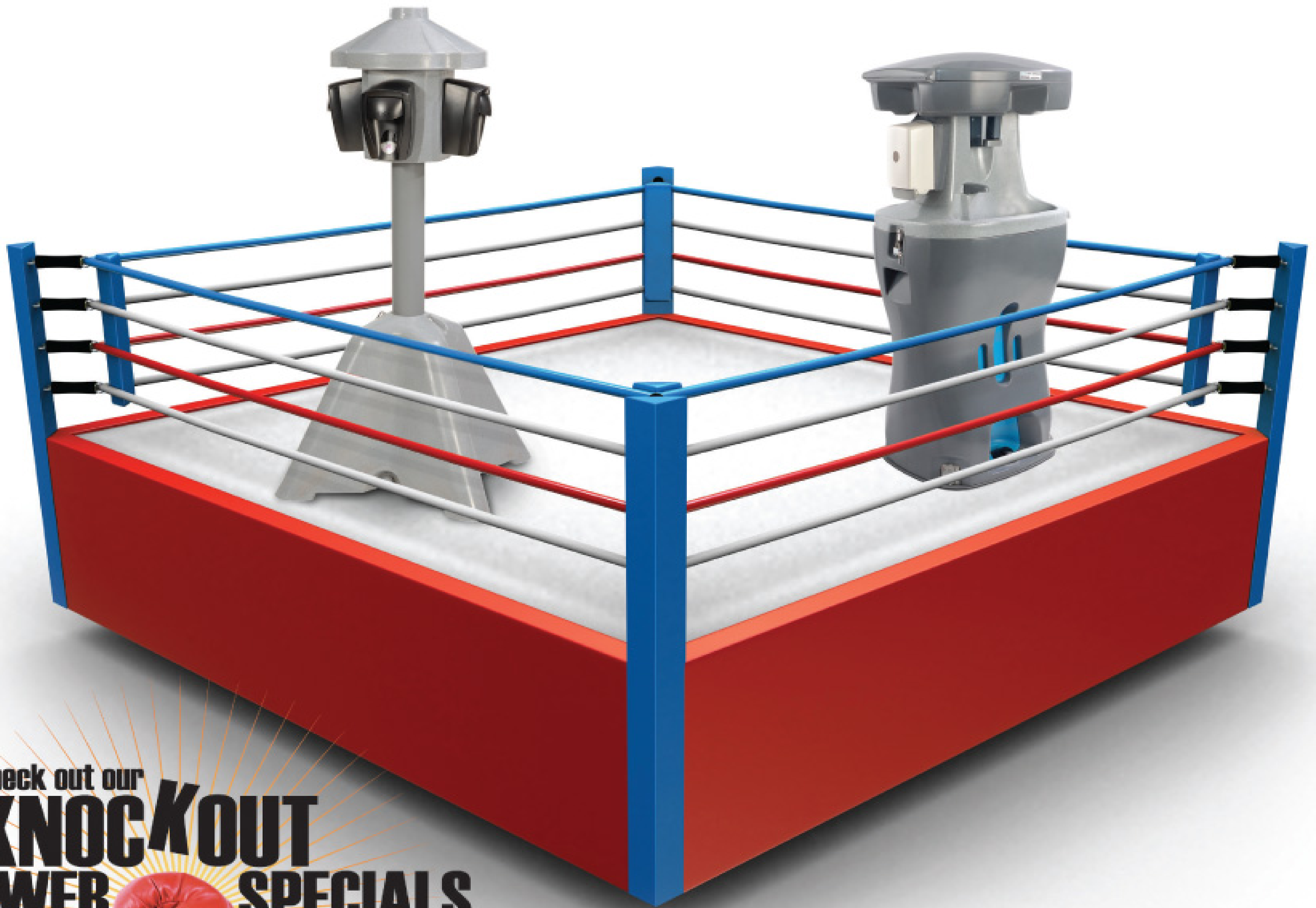
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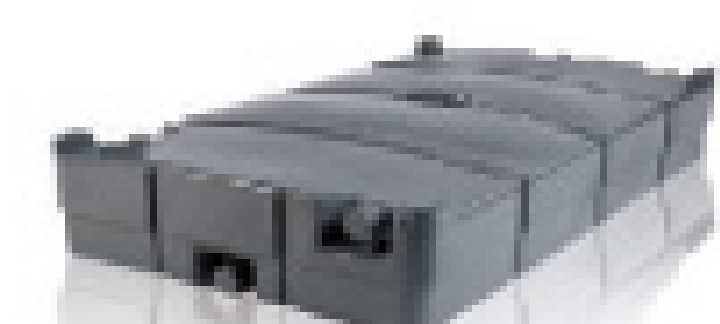
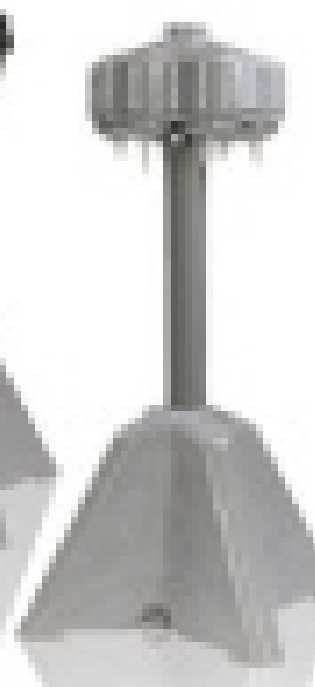
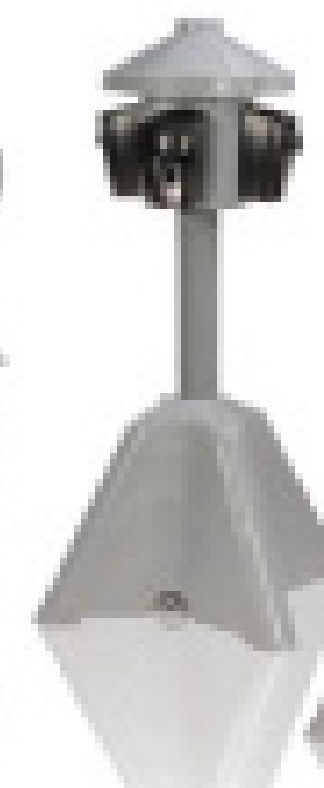


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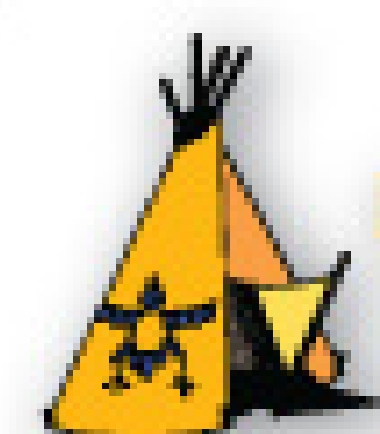
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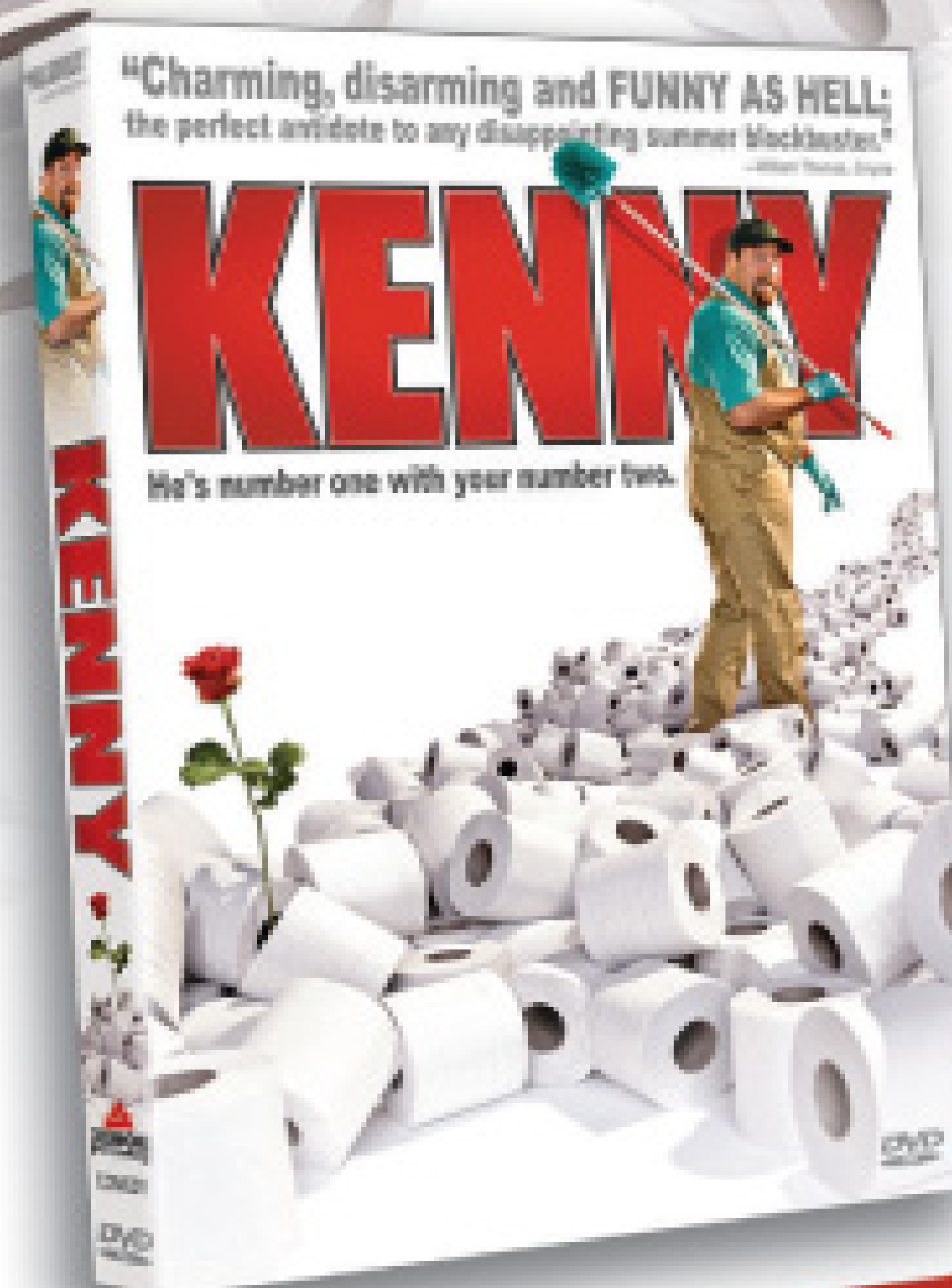
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Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for a decade and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of business ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.

No More 9 to 5?

Giving employees the option of working four 10-hour days cuts their commuting costs by 20 percent. If enough employers did it, it could reduce America's dependence on foreign oil too, but is it good for your company?

By Judy Kneiszel



Did you ever ask yourself (or Dolly Parton) why workin' 9 to 5 was the way to make a living? And why the five-day work week? With gas at \$4 a gallon and little or no relief in sight, a lot of employers, including many state and local governments, are reconsidering the whole notion of a "standard" work week and getting creative with employee schedules to cut commuting and operating costs.

For some employers and employees, this works great; for others, it doesn't. There's more to it than fuel savings. Look at the pros and cons when considering if scrapping the traditional work week works for your company:

Pro: Keeping Good Employees

By making their commute more affordable, and allowing employees an extra day at home with their families or pursuing outside hobbies, employees are likely to work harder and stay with the company longer. This reduces how much time and

money a company has to spend finding and training new employees.

Pro: Reduced Child Care Costs

Assuming child care for a time period exceeding the normal eight-hour workday is not more expensive (as it sometimes is), by working a four-day week, a parent could reduce not only fuel costs, but day-care costs by

For workers operating heavy equipment or doing hard physical labor, a 10-hour day could cause fatigue and subsequently costly fatigue-related mistakes or injuries. Make sure workers can handle the extra two hours.

20 percent ... 40 percent if both parents switch to a four-day week but have different weekdays off so they can each take over one day of child care.

Con: Long Days Away From Home

It may be difficult to find child care as early and as late as a 10-hour day would require, and while parents are home an extra day, the days away are long. This may be especially troubling for parents of kids who are too old for day care but young enough to get in a lot of trouble if they have no parental supervision for 10 to 12 hours at a stretch — let's say the "ages 12 and up" crowd.

Con: Fatigue

For workers operating heavy equipment or doing hard physical labor, a 10-hour day could cause fatigue and subsequently costly fatigue-related mistakes or injuries. Make sure workers can handle the extra two hours. And remember, for those with a long commute, a 10-hour workday can really be a 12-hour day.

Con: Insignificant Savings

For someone who commutes 15 miles each way in a car that gets 20 miles to the gallon, paying \$4 a gallon for gas, their savings is only \$6 a day or \$300 a year, not counting the saved wear and tear on the car. And that's assuming the employee doesn't spend their new day off driving around. It may not be worth shaking up the company and employees lives for such a small amount of money.

Pro: Lowered Absenteeism

With a weekday off to schedule doctor's appointments, dental checkups and parent-teacher conferences, employees shouldn't have to take time off from work for these events any more.

Pro: Savings on Other Expenses

If the weekday off is staggered among employees so there's still someone conducting the company's business five (or six) days a week, the costs to heat, cool and illuminate facilities will remain the same. However, if everybody in the office gets Friday off, there will be a savings on utility bills. For employees, working four days means one less day to buy or pack a lunch and one less clean, pressed work shirt needed.

IT'S ALL ABOUT FLEXIBILITY

Just because one company adjusts its working calendar doesn't mean others will follow. The issue for many businesses is being available during the same hours their clients keep. Somebody's got to be answering the phone when customers call. And you can't very well refuse to service restrooms on Fridays if a customer demands that theirs be serviced on Friday.

So maybe staggering weekdays off among employees is the solution rather than having everybody off on the same day. That way everything is covered. Of course you don't save on the cost of heating, A/C, etc. like you would if you shut down entirely for an extra day; that's the compromise.

Maybe the answer for your company lies somewhere in-between the traditional work week and the four-day week. Employees could work five (or even six) days a week during the busy season, four days a week (or less) during slow times. This schedule plays in well with many portable sanitation companies, which slow down in the winter. Turning down the heat one day a week over winter could produce significant savings for contractors in northern regions.

Or, perhaps the savings of consolidating service routes to four days would be so great that it's worth it to offer customers some kind of incentive to work within your schedule.

If the four-day work week doesn't seem like it would work for your company, there are other ways you can help employees save on gas. Encouraging them to organize carpools, subsidizing public transportation and allowing some employees to work from home are just a few options to consider.

And that's the trend more than the four-day week. Not everyone is jumping on the bandwagon and shortening the work week, but companies are becoming more open to creativity, flexibility and change. You know the old saying: If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you always got. And in today's economy, doing what you've always done means being stuck with high fuel bills. It's time to think outside the box. ■



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Driver Dave Miller (left) unloads some of the 156 units that B-There Environmental Services placed at the Catoctin Colorfest in Thurmont, Md. (Photos by Gil Longwell)

SHOWING *their Colors*

By Betty Dageforde

THE TEAM

Tony and Jennifer Beccio operate B-There Environmental Services LLC out of their home in McSherrystown, Pa. Their equipment and vehicle storage yard is five miles down the road in Littlestown, just a few miles north of the Maryland border. Jennifer handles bookkeeping, scheduling and sales while Tony works in the field.

Their sons T.J., 18, and Kirby, 16, work summers and weekends. For large events, even the younger kids — Chad, 14, Logan, 12, and Jessica, 10 — help out. In addition, the company has three full-time route drivers: Bill Lutz, Dave Miller and Ethan Conrad.

COMPANY HISTORY

Tony Beccio spent 13 years, and Jennifer Beccio 8 years, working in the portable and septic industry before striking out on their own in 2007. Today, 75 percent of their business is portable restroom rentals, but they also pro-

vide roll-off container services and septic and grease trap pumping in a 50-mile radius.

Because of their background, the Beccios quickly grew the business, serving events including the Preakness Stakes, the Baltimore Marathon, and a contract with the U.S. Naval Academy for its sporting events, as well as construction contracts.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The commissioners of Thurmont send out requests for proposals every year for Colorfest. Although B-There Environmental Services is a new business, Tony Beccio had worked this event before, so organizers were familiar with him. "They know me, know my work

ethic and how I like to do things," he says. He bid on the event and won.

THE MAIN EVENT

As the fall colors start to spread across the Blue Ridge Mountains, the small town of Thurmont, Md., at the base of Catoctin Mountain gears up for the annual Catoctin

Dark green Aspen units from Five Peaks Technology provide a natural backdrop for the festive fall crafts on display.

THE JOB: Catoctin Colorfest

LOCATION: Thurmont, Md.

THE PRO: B-There Environmental Services, McSherrystown, Pa.





Members of the B-There Environmental Services crew (from left) include Bill Lutz, owners Tony Beccio and his wife, Jennifer, their son T.J., Ethan Conrad and Dave Miller.

Colorfest arts and crafts show on the second weekend in October. Locals also jokingly refer to it as the "town-wide yard sale" as everyone tries to get in on the action. The 6,200 residents host 100,000 visitors for this two-day event in its 45th year. Neighboring towns also participate with such activities as orchard tours, church dinners and apple butter boiling.

THE JOB

B-There Environmental Services was tasked with placing restrooms at the Community Park and the Activities Grounds where the arts and crafts booths were set up, as well as parking areas, food courts, and other pedestrian areas throughout the town — which basically shuts down for the event.

BY THE NUMBERS

The company placed 156 units in 19 locations. These were all dark green Aspen and Matterhorn (ADA-compliant) units from Five Peaks Technology. All units have interior hand-sanitizers. "A lot of companies don't do that but we've had great feedback on it," says Beccio.

Three banks of 20 standard and two ADA-compliant units were set up at the Activities Grounds and the Community Park (two banks). A bank of 20 standard units was set up at the American Legion, site of a large food court and parking lot. Eleven standard and two ADA-compliant units were set up at a large parking area. The other restrooms were placed in banks of one to six standard units at 14 other locations throughout the town: schools, car washes, municipal parking lots, and small businesses.

LET'S ROLL

Three Chevrolet 2500s with McKee Technologies Inc. trailers, each holding 20 units, were put into service to deliver rest-

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

The festival ended at 5 p.m. each day but it took another couple hours for the crowds to disperse, so the company waited until 7:30 Saturday night to clean the units. It took about four hours. Units were pumped again Sunday night in preparation for removal. About 5,000 gallons were pumped out the first night, and another 2,500 the second. Two team members wearing company T-shirts operated the service vehicle, a Chevy 7500 from TankTec Tank Technologies & Supply Co. The vehicle has a 2,000-gallon aluminum tank (1,500 waste/500 freshwater) and a Masport pump. Waste was transferred to a borrowed 5,000-gallon tanker truck and disposed of at the township's wastewater facility.

Using products from J & J Chemical Co., units were scrubbed, sanitized, and

The two-day Catoctin Colorfest draws more than 100,000 visitors to the Thurmont, Md., community of 6,200 residents.



"To be successful, you have to be able to keep the business you get ... If you provide a good service then that's the word that gets around. People know we're going to be there. That's why we have that name — B-There means we'll be there."

Tony Beccio

rooms Wednesday and Thursday nights. The crew returned Friday night to finish setting up and to open and stock all units.

Units near schools and businesses were removed Sunday night, the rest on Monday.

replenished. Beccio's philosophy on cleaning is, "Would I let my kids use it? That's how I expect them to be cleaned every time."

CAUGHT BY SURPRISE

Attendance was heavier than anticipated, but Beccio and his team were on hand to do what they could. The crowds were too thick for B-There to get a vehicle in to clean or pump out units during the day, but it went in Saturday to replenish the paper. This year they'd like to start out with more units.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

"To be successful, you have to be able to keep the business you get," says Beccio. "A billboard is great, but if you mess up the first time, they're not going to call you again. If you provide a good service then that's the word that gets around. People know we're going to be there. That's why we have that name — B-There means we'll be there." ■



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The advantages of Vantage. The double-walled Vantage (right) is a top-of-the-line PolyPortables' restroom. It's engineered with common sense and built rock-solid, just like the rest of the PolyPortables' models.

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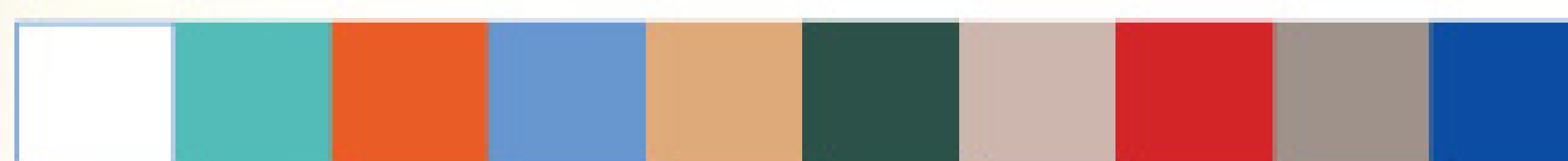
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Roger Brookshire (left) and Tom Schenderlein receive final instructions from Blu-John.com owner Jeremy Hawkins (right) before beginning their route. (Photos by Harris Hatcher)

Blu-John.com Cumming, Ga.

Owners: Jeremy Hawkins and ADCO Holdings

Years in Business: 7

Employees: 26

Service area:
60-mile radius of Atlanta

Specialties:
Portable sanitation

Affiliations:
Portable Sanitation Association International, National Association of Wastewater Transporters Inc., Atlanta General Contractors Association

Web site: www.blu-john.com



SUPERSIZE ME!

ADCO International concentrates on buying profitable companies and employee retention for smart regional expansion

By Ken Wysocky

Remember the old adage that says a chain is only as strong as its weakest link? The same holds true when it comes to employees in the portable restroom industry, says Jeremy Hawkins, the frontman for the U.S. operations of global portable restroom service provider ADCO International.

"You are who your drivers are and what they do," says Hawkins, minority owner and operator of Blu-John.com in Cumming, Ga., the largest of seven portable restroom operations under the umbrella of ADCO Holdings, the U.S. arm of ADCO International. "The company is only as good as its weakest driver."

Attracting and retaining good employees, however, is a constant battle for ADCO, just as it is for many smaller portable restroom operators, says Hawkins, who is steering ADCO's push into U.S. markets while holding the reins at Blu-John.

"In this industry, the hardest thing is acquiring good general managers, good drivers — good employees in general," Hawkins says. "It's tough to fill job openings from top to bottom."

Finding good drivers is particularly vex-

ing. Drivers are critical because they interact with customers more than any other employee and represent the face of the company. Yet they're difficult to attract because the job isn't very glamorous.

Blu-John.com and its sister companies surmount the stigma by treating drivers as professionals.

"Our guys are professional drivers, just like a UPS driver or a bottled water service guy," Hawkins says. "If your employees aren't top quality, then the company won't be top quality. This industry is all about service."

"You can have the best trucks with all the newest bells and whistles and the best restrooms with all the bells and whistles, but if your drivers aren't dedicated and trained well, you're not going to be as successful as you can be."

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

ADCO offers competitive pay, benefits and training to keep employees happy, as well as special incentive programs.

Benefits include paid vacation, sick and personal days, health and dental insurance and a 401(k) retirement plan, plus uniforms and Portable Sanitation Association International certification opportunities for drivers.

The company also encourages sales staff to attend seminars, classes and other continuing education activities, and pays for college courses for general managers who are on a corporate track.



Jeremy Hawkins



Driver Steve Brooks finishes servicing restrooms and hand-wash stations at a church addition construction site near Cumming, Ga. Blu-John.com's current business mix is approximately 85 percent construction and 15 percent special events.

"You can have the best trucks with all the newest bells and whistles and the best restrooms with all the bells and whistles, but if your drivers aren't dedicated and trained well, you're not going to be as successful as you can be."

Jeremy Hawkins



The PSAI certification is a critical component of drivers' training. And Hawkins says that before any driver makes his first service stop, he also receives two weeks of in-house training to learn the correct way to operate a truck and service restrooms.

Hawkins' views about employee retention have been shaped by years in the industry. After serving as a regional sales manager for 3M's office products division, Hawkins cut his teeth in the portable restroom industry as the head of international sales for restroom manufacturer PolyPortables Inc. from 1990 to 2000.

"I was on the other side of the business for 10 years," he recalls. "I lived in Germany and traveled all over the world — South America, Russia, Asia and Europe. I joined PolyPortables right after the Berlin Wall came down, so it was a good time to be in the portable restroom business. It was a boom time.

"After I'd set up several European distributorships, I didn't need to live in Europe any more, so I went back home to the Atlanta area, where I grew up. Then ADCO made me an offer I couldn't refuse, and here I am."

GREEN LIGHT FOR BLU-JOHN

The U.S. branch of ADCO Holdings started in 1998 in Atlanta, and Hawkins established the Blu-John.com subsidiary and built a new office for both in Atlanta in 2001. Since ADCO landed, the company acquired six more portable restroom companies: a Waste Management operation in Savannah, Ga., that was renamed Blu-John.com of Savannah Inc.; Sani-Kan in Cumberland, R.I., which serves the entire state and the metro-Boston area; Down East Rent A John Inc. in Jacksonville, N.C.; Port-San in Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Portable Sanitation and Services (PSS) in Jacksonville, Fla.; and Sun Coast Portable Sanitation in Fort Myers, Fla.

ADCO's U.S. operations include nearly 25,000 restrooms — about 4,000 at Blu-John alone — mostly made by PolyPortables Inc., PolyJohn Enterprises Corp., Satellite Industries Inc., Synergy World Inc. and Five Peaks Technology. The holding company also runs about 400 serv-

ice vehicles, about 25 owned by Blu-John.

When it buys new trucks, ADCO Holdings prefers GMC 7500s and International 4300s, built out by Progress Tank with 1,200-gallon wastewater and 300-gallon freshwater tanks, Hawkins says.

Using advanced technology makes the company more attractive to employees while increasing efficiency and productivity. For instance, ADCO relies heavily on Global Positioning System technology. All route supervisors carry GPS units, which come in handy when they need to run a route for a sick driver or make an emergency service call.

"Our supervisors wear a lot of hats, and GPS makes it easy to find places they may not be familiar with," Hawkins says.

In addition, dispatchers, route supervisors and general managers all have Total Activity Control software from Clear Computing Inc. installed on their computers. The software enables them to monitor all aspects of operations, including efficient routing.

"One of the biggest aspects of this industry is route density," Hawkins says. "If your drivers are criss-crossing each other, you're losing money. If you don't achieve good route density, you're just spinning your wheels."

When current or former customers call ADCO, the TAC software automatically calls up their account history on a customer service representative's computer screen — how many restrooms they order, location of the units, what day they're serviced, and so on.

"For expediency and efficiency, that's a great thing," Hawkins says.



Dawn Smith and Ashley Olson look over printouts of service schedules and routes using MapPoint software.

"If your drivers are criss-crossing each other, you're losing money. If you don't achieve good route density, you're just spinning your wheels."

Jeremy Hawkins

CAREFUL EXPANSION

The economic slowdown has somewhat dampened ADCO's growth plans, Hawkins says.

"It's very volatile right now," he observes. "A company with 2,000 units out there right now might have only 1,200 by the end of the acquisition period, so you've got to be careful. But as soon as the downturn ends, we'll be as aggressive as we ever were."

Prospecting for potential acquisitions starts with a focus on growth areas, Hawkins says.

"We examine markets that we feel are developing, with ongoing growth forecasts," he explains. "Then we look at a company and how it fits in its market — its market share, its reputation and the quality of service it provides."

"We look at the value of the company's customer base. In other words, does the company have customers just because it offers the cheapest rates in town, or does it do business based on quality of service?"

ADCO also analyzes a company's customer database to see how long customers have stayed with the company. It also examines the company's pricing structure.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Being one of the country's largest portable restroom operations has its advantages, not the least of which is purchasing power.

"In dealing with vendors, we pull together our needs for all seven companies and get a volume price break," Hawkins explains.

ADCO's size also makes it more attractive to other large regional or national businesses.

"A lot of builders we deal with are national in scope," Hawkins notes. "So we can tell them, 'Hey, we're also in the Raleigh-Durham area, just like you are — we'd love to offer the same pricing and get your business there, too.'" The same is true for certain special events, Hawkins says, pointing to a traveling circus that passes through several of ADCO's service areas.

ADCO can also parlay its size into joint marketing efforts with businesses that offer complementary services, such as fencing, storage containers and roll-off Dumpsters.

"We'll meet with local vendors and team up with the ones that we get along with and that provide superior service," Hawkins says. "Then our people promote their busi-

Blu-John.com owns 25 service trucks, including this 2006 GMC NQR driven by Steve Brooks.



nesses and they promote ours. We can even send one invoice for all the services. That sort of one-stop shopping happens a whole lot."

Of course, those kinds of relationships can backfire if the informal partners provide poor service.

"But if you do your homework and have a relationship with the company you're cross-marketing with, you can keep those instances far and few between," Hawkins notes.

As a large company, ADCO also can provide other employment options to workers who want to relocate. "If an employee wants to move from Atlanta to, say, the Tampa/Fort Myers area in Florida, we might be able to help them stay with the company," Hawkins says.

LOVES A CHALLENGE

Despite almost 20 years in the same industry, it's clear that Hawkins isn't the least bit jaded. He still relishes his job and the people he works with.

"It's a beautiful industry in that you get involved in all levels of running a business," he says. "And I love the people in the industry. They're all down-to-earth, with a lot of entrepreneurial spirit."

While his job entails many challenges, Hawkins doesn't mind wearing all the different hats that requires.

"It's a challenge, but if you win, you win big," he says. "If you're in a good market, have a good marketing plan, have your routes organized and have good people working for you, it's the most fun in the world. It's a challenge staying up with all that, but that's the fun part." ■

Perks and prizes motivate, retain employees

To keep employees happy, Blu-John.com and its sister companies provide several unusual perks above and beyond the standard benefits package offered by most businesses, explains minority owner and operator Jeremy Hawkins.

For starters, the company emphasizes on-the-job safety by awarding employees quarterly cash bonuses if the operation goes accident-free. In addition, to make sure drivers make clean restrooms a priority, the company awards a monthly cash bonus to the driver with the cleanest restrooms, as judged through random checks by supervisors.

To motivate drivers to develop good relationships with supervisors on construction sites, they receive monthly cash bonuses if they sell any add-on units or additional services.

Last but not least, if drivers are interested in visiting Europe, ADCO will set them up with company cars and corporate hotel rates, as well as tours of the company's sister facilities.

"It's a nice benefit for the drivers," Hawkins notes.

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A Good Time to Buy?

Ted Rulseh is the COLE Publishing editor of Cleaner, Onsite Installer and Municipal Sewer & Water magazines. Readers can direct inquiries to him by contacting this publication at 800/257-7222 or e-mailing editor@cleaner.com.



The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 may provide sound reasons for moving planned purchases of major equipment into 2008

By Ted J. Rulseh

If you own a business, there's much more to the U.S. government's economic stimulus program than the check you received in the mail last spring or summer.

The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 included two provisions that could make it wise to purchase major equipment before the year is up. More to the point, if you need to replace a vehicle or expand or upgrade your fleet, there may be substantial tax advantages to doing so in 2008.

That's because the Economic Stimulus Act includes special expensing and bonus depreciation provisions that let you write off more of the cost of the equipment for immediate tax savings against your 2008 tax liability.

BIGGER THAN BEFORE

The last time the government did something like this was under the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003. This time around, the immediate expensing and bonus depreciation components are even more attractive.

You won't want to jump in and buy equipment strictly for these tax breaks, and you'll want to talk to your accountant about all the specifics, and about your own situation, before moving any planned purchase into 2008. Still these special, limited-time benefits may well be worth exploring.

"The combination of these rules will generate a first-year tax deduction on new property ranging from 52 to 66 percent of the total cost of the equipment."

Ken Cloutier, Wipfli CPAs and Consultants

The tax breaks in the Economic Stimulus Act are designed for smaller businesses. They were enacted to stimulate the economy by encouraging businesses to purchase equipment sooner, according to Ken Cloutier, a certified public accountant in the office of Wipfli LLP in Rhinelander, Wis.

Here is a look at the two basic provisions:

Special expensing. Under the Economic Stimulus Act, you can expense (within certain limits) qualified purchases of up to \$250,000 in equipment placed in service this year, provided the total of such purchases for the year does not exceed \$800,000. (Purchases beyond \$800,000 reduce the amount you can expense on a dollar-for-dollar basis.) The new ceiling on expensing is nearly double the \$128,000 of purchases you could expense in previous years.

Bonus depreciation. Now you can take bonus depreciation equal to 50 percent of amounts beyond the \$250,000 limit on special expensing, again for equipment purchased and placed in service in 2008. You can then claim regular depreciation on the remaining 50 percent of the cost.

WHY BUY NOW?

The accompanying table illustrates the tax advantages of buying new equipment in 2008. If you were to buy \$300,000 worth of new equipment this year, you could immediately deduct \$280,000 on your 2008 tax return. That's \$117,600 more than you could have deducted for the same purchase last year.

	Before 2008 Act	After 2008 Act
First-year expensing	\$128,000	\$250,000
Bonus depreciation \$300,000 - 250,000 x .50	n/a	\$ 25,000
Regular depreciation - first year \$300,000 - 128,000 x .20 \$300,000 - 250,000 - 25,000 x .20	\$ 34,400	\$ 5,000
TOTAL FIRST-YEAR BENEFIT	\$162,400	\$280,000
DIFFERENCE		\$117,600

Your actual first-year benefit under these tax law changes will depend on the characteristics of your business. Factors such as taxable income, time of year when you bought the equipment, and your particular tax scenario may limit the benefit. Still, these provisions make it worth your while to consider buying equipment now, or soon — especially if you were already considering additions or replacements to your fleet.

When have the tax laws worked so heavily in your favor? When has there been a better time to buy? Contact your tax professional to discuss specifically how these special and temporary provisions can help your business. ■



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Learn the Ropes of Leasing

Fred S. Steingold practices law in Ann Arbor, Mich. He is the author of Legal Guide for Starting and Running a Small Business and The Employer's Legal Handbook published by Nolo.



If you're considering leasing your next piece of equipment, here's a host of new financial terms to learn

By Fred S. Steingold

Whether your business needs a \$2,000 photocopier or a \$50,000 vacuum truck, you face a key decision: Should you buy the equipment or lease it? There's no one-size-fits-all answer. It all depends on business and financial factors.

Let's start with the pros and cons of leasing versus buying business equipment. Then we'll look at some details of what's contained in an equipment lease.

MAKING A DECISION

Leasing can be the better choice if you have limited money in the bank or if your business needs to move up to improved equipment every few years. With a lease, you probably won't have to come up with a downpayment. You can start using the equipment right away without depleting your cash reserves. And typically you can deduct the lease payments on your tax return, reducing the amount of tax you owe.

Another advantage is that it may be easier to lease equipment than to qualify for a bank loan that would let you buy the equipment outright. This could be important if your business hasn't established a sterling credit record yet. And if you need high-tech equipment or equipment that's likely to soon become obsolete, leasing frees you up to get the next generation of equipment once the lease expires.

But while there are several advantages to leasing, there are also some drawbacks. For one thing, over the long haul, it's usually more expensive to lease than to buy. The monthly payments will add up to more than the price of the equipment. What's more, when the lease is over, you must return the equipment to the company you leased it from — though this isn't a big deal if the equipment has become obsolete.

By contrast, when you buy equipment, you own it forever, giving you a choice of when it's best to upgrade. With equipment that has a long lifespan, it may pay to come up with the money to buy. And since you'll own it, when it's time to move on to a newer version, you may be able bring in some cash by selling the older version.

On the negative side, buying equipment means you'll have to come up with a hefty downpayment. Often, it's 20 percent or more of the purchase price if you finance the equipment through a bank. And as technology changes, the equipment may become obsolete even before you've paid it off.

LEASE TERMINOLOGY

Let's assume you've weighed the pros and cons, and decided

leasing is the way to go. What should you look for in the lease? Here are some suggestions:

- **Are you personally liable for lease payments?** You are if your business is a sole proprietorship or partnership. You are not if your business is a corporation or LLC — unless the lease requires a guarantee from you as a business owner. Check the lease carefully to see if you're required to sign as a guarantor.

- **Are there any charges in addition to the monthly lease payments?** Sometimes, a lease requires a business to pay a delivery or setup charge, or both.

- **What's the penalty if you're late in making a payment?** Some leases hit you hard if you're more than a few days late.

- **Who is responsible for repair and maintenance costs?** See

what the lease says about this. If you have to pay these costs, it can add significantly to your financial burden — especially with equipment that's subject to frequent breakdowns.

- **Can you assign the lease?** If you sell your business, you'd like to make it easy for the buyer to take over the remaining portion of the lease. Some leases prohibit assignment.

- **Is there a way to get out of the lease early?** Some leases have an escape clause — though usually at a substantial cost. Still, it can be good to know you have a way to get out if the equipment doesn't meet your expectations, or you'd like to upgrade.

- **Are there additional charges?** The lease may require you to insure the equipment, and to pay for any personal property tax assessed by the local government.

- **Can you buy the equipment when the lease is over?** Some leases give you the option of paying a preset amount and keeping the equipment. Even if the lease doesn't contain such a clause, you may be able to negotiate a buyout once the lease ends.

- **Do you have to keep the equipment at a specific location?** Many leases have such a requirement. This can be a problem if your business has several locations, or if you're planning to move. Deal with this issue upfront so it won't be a headache later on. Remember, leasing is often a great option — as long as you go into it with your eyes wide open. ■

Is there a way to get out of the lease early? Some leases have an escape clause — though usually at a substantial cost. Still, it can be good to know you have a way to get out if the equipment doesn't meet your expectations, or you'd like to upgrade.

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September 2008

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Construction grade pressure washer from Water Cannon

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room and the Super Mongo Mover hand truck. Its low-profile design allows the tailgate to be lowered without having to remove or fold anything. For more information: 866/599-3325; www.dealassoc.com. ■



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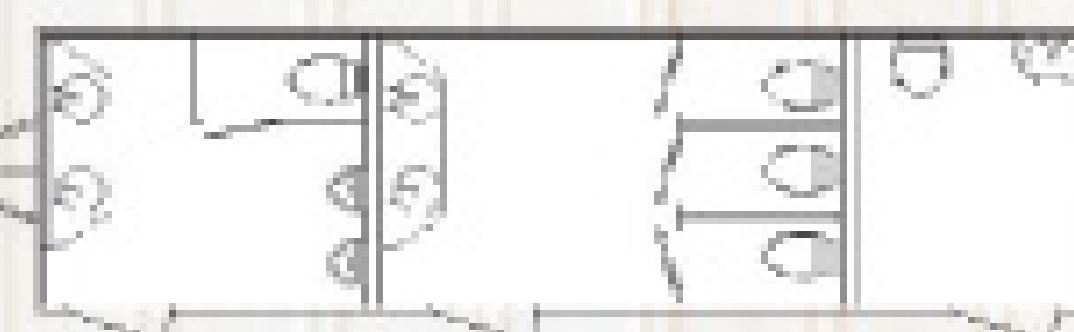
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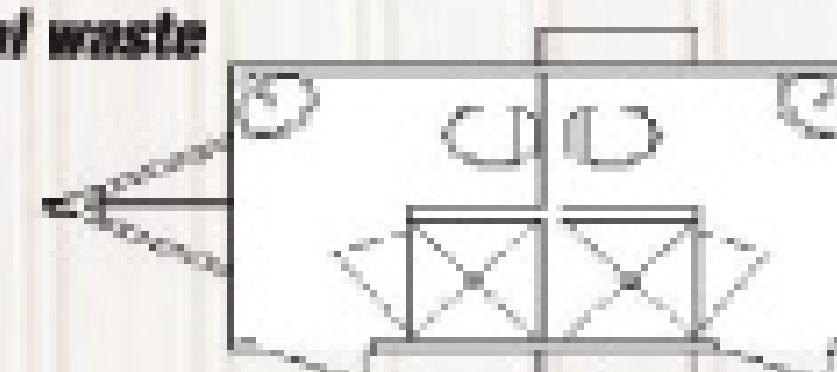
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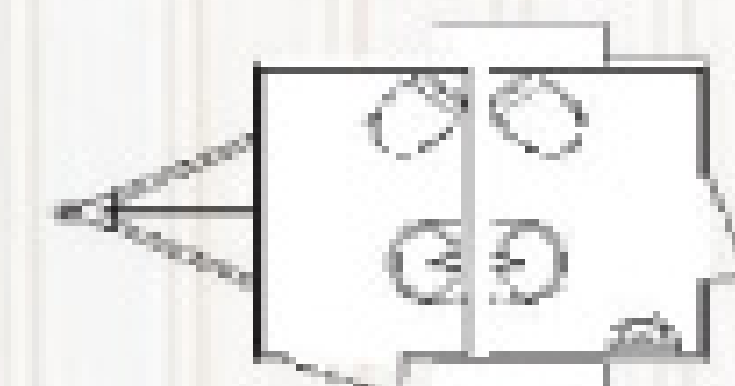
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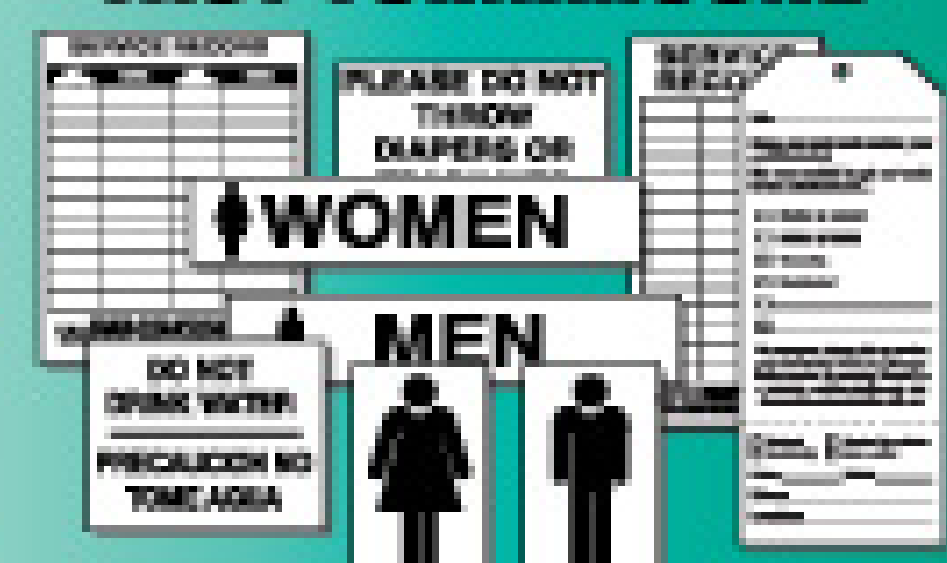
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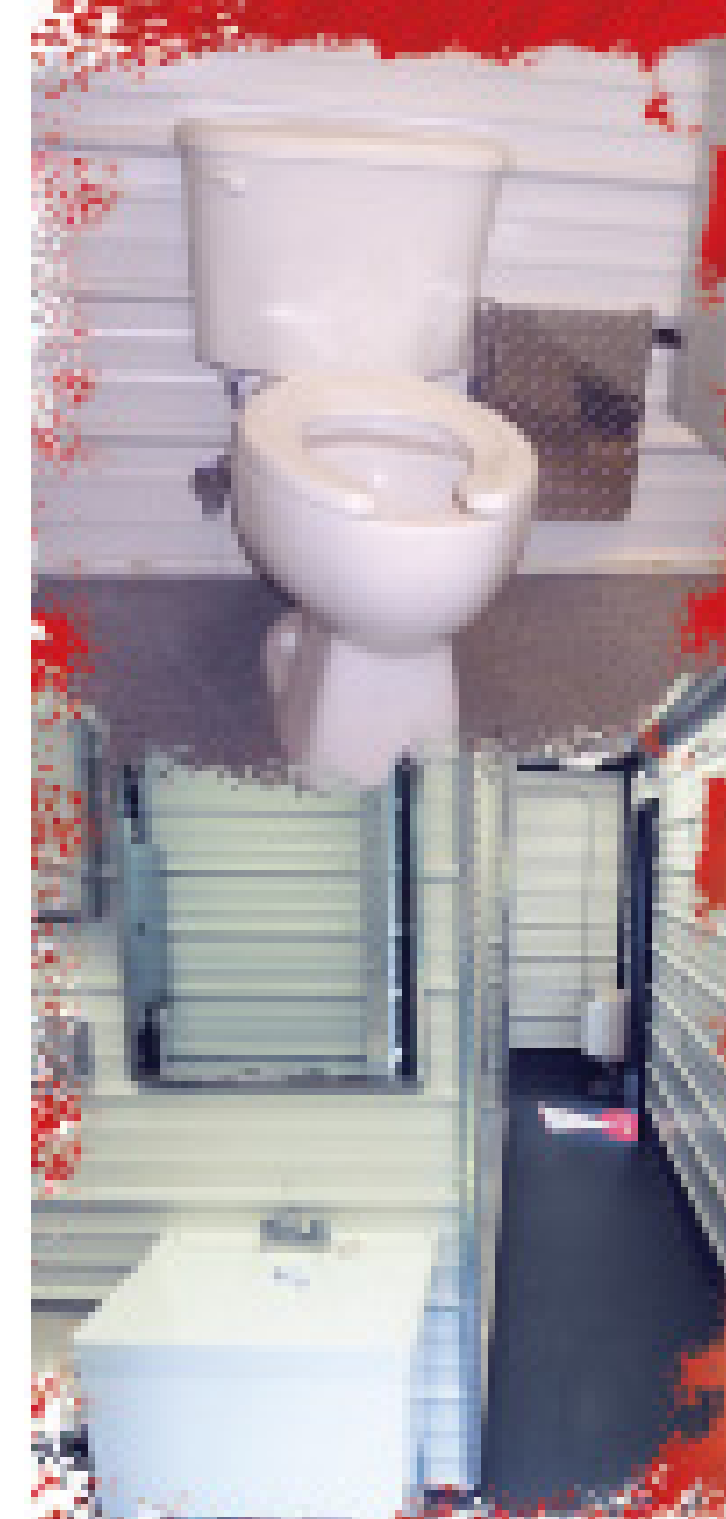
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Mary Shafer writes about issues important to PROs. Direct comments or questions to Shafer at thinktank@promonthly.com.



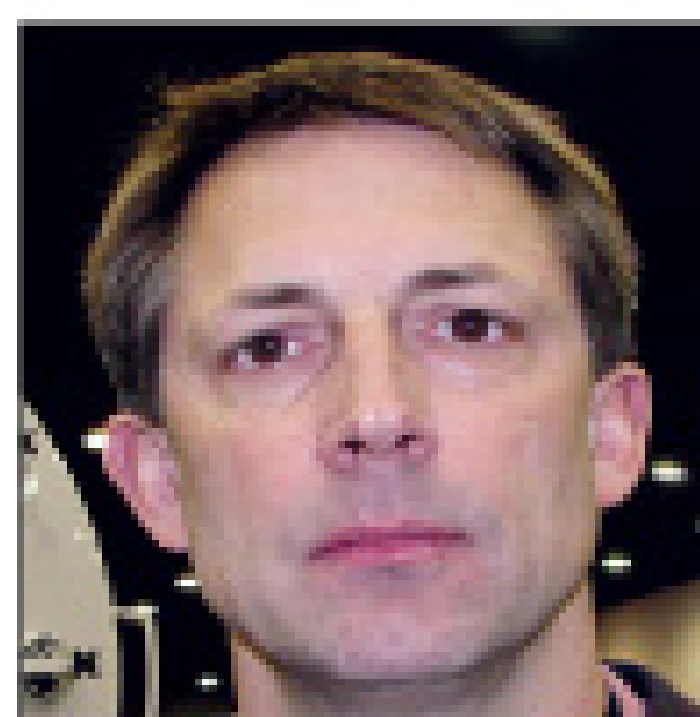
Lease or Buy?

PROs have different opinions about whether they should purchase or rent their next service truck

By Mary Shafer

With service vehicles being one of the largest capital investments a PRO can make, the decision to lease or buy is an important one. Not only does this decision affect the way vehicles are managed — expensed item or depreciated asset — it also impacts cash flow, maintenance schedules and sometimes, even what types of vehicles are available.

Two PROs with very different situations talk about why they do what they do when it comes to building their service fleets, and what might change their minds.



John St. George

Name: John St. George, owner
Company: Portable Sanitation Service
Location: Mechanicsville, Va.
Employees: 8
Years in Business: 10

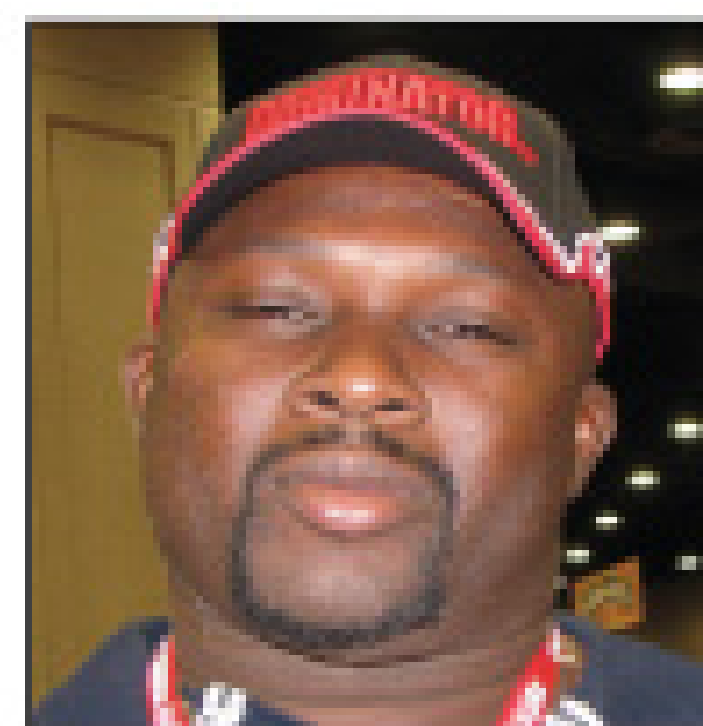
John St. George's company is located in a northeastern suburb of Richmond. The company buys all its vehicles — large pumpers as well as smaller service trucks. He's not a big fan of vehicle leasing, and can't really imagine anything that would make him change his mind.

St. George fields 1,000 portable restrooms, with 85 percent of the units serving construction sites. "My issue with leasing is that the equipment gets beat up so bad. We put a lot of miles on the trucks."

Despite the appeal of a "new every two" or similar lease plan, this Virginian isn't tempted. "Is there an advantage to getting a new cab and chassis? Sure, but I'd rather own the asset as opposed to changing it out."

For St. George, it's a simple matter of fiscal sense. "Our company tries to frontload most of its financing. We don't (enter into financing deals that) go past 36 months. And in that 36 months, I could own that truck" without taking the huge backend hit for dings and damages that constitute normal wear-and-tear for his fleet, he says.

"And then there's the downtime when you have to turn in the leases and get the equipment re-fitted," he adds. The thought of being without one of his trucks for any stretch of time doesn't sit well with St. George. "I'm not as knowledgeable on that as some guys, but I just don't think it would work for us."



Norton Williams Jr.

Name: Norton Williams Jr., co-owner
Company: When You Got To Go Sewage Disposal
Location: Kingshill, Virgin Islands
Employees: 2
Years in Business: 4

Norton Williams Jr. pumps septic tanks and grease traps along with providing portable restroom service in the tourist paradise of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Currently fielding 42 single units, Williams says about half of those are out on monthly contracts at construction sites, while the rest are reserved for events and professional functions.

"I need the cash I would save and I need the vehicle, so I would consider leasing ... I've only met one company that will consider leasing to a firm outside the continental U.S."

Norton Williams Jr.

He currently owns his vehicles, but has considered leasing in the past, and would do so again. "I need the cash I would save and I need the vehicle, so I would consider leasing," he says. But in addition to all the usual factors a PRO must weigh in a lease-or-buy decision, Williams has another serious obstacle to contend with.

"I've only met one company that will consider leasing to a firm outside the continental U.S." He's talking with that company to see what can be worked out. If some accommodation can be made for his location, Williams will be seeking favorable monthly payment terms and interest rates. If all the cards stack up in his favor, there may be a leased vehicle in his future. ■

BONUS

Think Tank Thought

If you're considering a lease-or-buy decision and want to skip over all the small print, compare apples to apples online using the handy payment terms calculator at www.finance.cch.com/sohoApplets/BizBuyvsLease.asp.



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The Rewards are Great

Serving on the PSAI Board of Directors has been a worthwhile experience

By Karen Holm

“Have you ever considered serving on the Portable Sanitation Association International Board of Directors?” This was a question I was asked in 1999. Well, of course my first reaction was, “Are you crazy?” I could never sit around a big conference table and actually share any ideas that I may have. Who would want to hear any of my thoughts or concerns?

This is one in a series of columns by committee chairs for the Portable Sanitation Association International.

I thought members on the PSAI Board of Directors were leaders in our industry. They own the largest portable restroom companies, and I was quite sure they had absolutely nothing else to do but think about the big issues facing our industry. Was I ever wrong!

Well, that certainly was not me. At that time, my company was very small and I was doing everything from answering phones, taking orders, doing accounts receivable, accounts payable, collections, financial reconciling and reports ... in other words, I was working 70 to 80 hours per week, as I am sure so many of you do.

Again my thought process was, “Are you really crazy? There is no way I would have time for a commitment like that.”

MANY ADVANCES

As I began thinking about the knowledge and experience I have gained over the previous ten years from the PSAI conventions and Nuts & Bolts workshops, I came to the realization that the PSAI has given me so much more than I could ever give back. So I asked myself: Why not me? Why not my experience? Why not my knowledge? Why not

my time? Why not my financial commitment? And if not me, then who?

It has been really exciting working with a group of dedicated people who are committed to positive change and growth of our association and industry.

Some of the changes during my involvement with the PSAI have been: In 2001, the Service Technician of the Year Award began. In 2004, the PSAI produced a service technician training video to complement the PSAI certification program. In 2006, certification was revised to include servicing hand-wash stations, and in 2007, servicing restroom trailers.

Since 2003, the PSAI has been working in conjunction with

the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's advisory committee on construction safety and health to impact regulatory standards and usage ratios for sanitation at construction sites. There have also been countless

advancements made at local and state levels.

As the current past president of the PSAI Board of Directors it is my duty to serve as the Nominating Committee chair. This committee consists of two current board directors and three PSAI general members. It is the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to nominate members of the association to any openings on the board of directors. It is also the Nominating Committee's duty to submit a suggested slate of executive officers for the board.

The PSAI Nomination Committee is seeking qualified individuals for nomination to the board of directors. There will be one director position to be filled this November at the annual convention in Daytona Beach, Fla. There will be a greater number of director position openings in November 2009.

To be considered as a member of the board of directors, your company must be a PSAI member in good standing for a minimum of 12 months. You must also be able to attend four board meetings a year. Two of the board meetings are held in conjunction with the PSAI Annual Convention and Trade Show in early November and the Nuts & Bolts Workshop held in mid-March. There are also board meetings held in May and September of each year.

TIME WELL SPENT

Because the PSAI is an international association, every other year there is a meeting held at an international location. Directors are responsible for travel, hotel and meal expenses. Also, directors are strongly encouraged to be involved and active in at least one committee.

As you can see, this is not a minor commitment. But it is a very rewarding one. I am very proud of my involvement with the PSAI Board of Directors; I know that I have gained far more than I have given.

So I am asking you, Have you ever considered serving on the Portable Sanitation Association International Board of Directors? If not, why not and if not you, who?

If you are interested in a nomination to or would like to nominate someone for the upcoming vacancy on the board of directors of the PSAI please feel free to contact me.

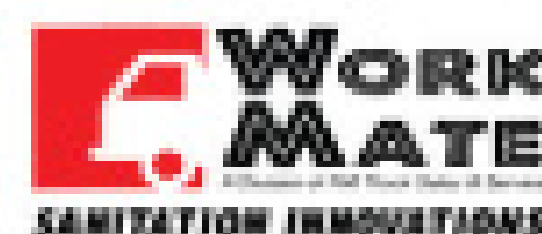
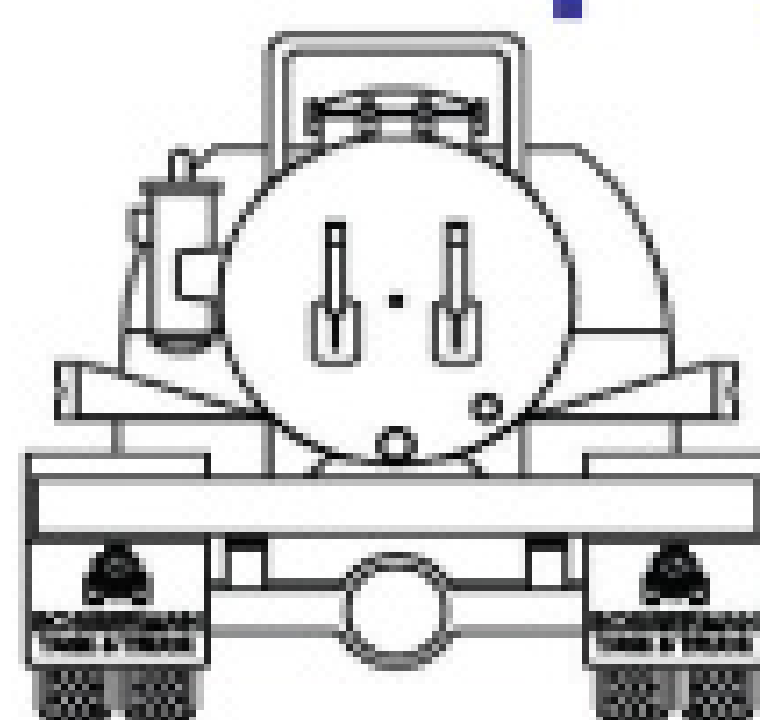
Karen Holm of On Site Sanitation Inc., St. Paul, Minn., is the PSAI Nominating Committee chair. She can be reached by phone at 651/429-3781 or by e-mail at karen@onsitesanitation.com. ■

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POLYPORTABLE STANDARDS AND INTEGRAS FOR SALE. Don't buy new when you can have the same thing for less half the cost. These units are blue w/grey and white molding, plastic lumber skids and in great condition. Please call for pricing. 863-673-8990. (PT9)

50 SEBACH PORTABLE TOILETS, excellent condition, HandSani dispensers, coat hooks, shelves. \$325 each. Call 208-687-6097. Located in North Idaho. (T9)

300 USED POLYJOHN Fleet Units for sale. Brown, good condition. \$150 each. Call Gina 352-369-5411 ext. 206 or email gina@floridaexpress.us. (CPT11)

PORTABLE RESTROOM TRAILERS

PARTY TRAILER FOR SALE. Trailer has a bathroom with sink, flat screen TV, grill, beer tap, etc. \$16,500. 843-529-1399. (T10)

LUXURY MEN AND WOMEN DRESSING/SHOWER TRAILER. Two large sit-down lighted vanities with separate dressing area and shower. 888-445-4928. (PT9)

24' EXECUTIVE RESTROOM TRAILER with water/sewer hookup. 4 ladies half baths, two mens half baths and four urinals. 888-445-4928. (PT9)

USED RESTROOM TRAILERS. Wells Cargo Comfort Elite III. 1 mens, 2 womens unit. A/C, heat. Rented only 22 times. \$19,000. American 814 Traditional. 1 mens with 1 stall, 3 urinals, and a sink, womens with 2 stalls and sink. Rented only 14 times. \$17,500. Call 770-458 7740. (PT9)

PORTABLE RESTROOM TRUCKS

2004 FORD F550 SUPER DUTY DIESEL PUMP TRUCK. White with gray interior, Best built with a 1050 gallon stainless steel tank, PTO driven Masport pump. Perfectly maintained by Gabrielli Ford in Jamaica, NY. Wholesale price of \$29,500. 718-986-9504. (PT9)

PORTABLE RESTROOM TRUCKS

2007 FORD F650 SATELLITE 1250 SERVICE TRUCK. 850 waste/400 fresh with 2-unit toilet carrier. Conde pump, purchased 11-07, low miles, \$61,900. N. Illinois 815-946-2813. (PT10)

NEWER MODEL INTERNATIONAL 4300S FOR SALE. Trucks are in excellent condition, equipped with 1000 gallon waste/500 gallon fresh water. Trucks are located in SW Florida. Please call for pricing and additional information. 863-673-8990. (PT9)

PUMPS/VACUUM

PORTABLE 300 GALLON VACUUM UNIT, stainless steel, custom built on March 2008 and trailer also available to sell. Please call for more information. 305-228-7592. (CPT9)

TANKS

USED 2003 SATELLITE MD 950 TANK in excellent condition. Includes work-lites, toolboxes, freshwater pump, 650 waste, 300 fresh, ready to mount on truck. Includes Satellite 2 toilet carrier and Conde 6SS vacuum pump with mounts for 6.0 powerstroke diesel. Tank came off 2003 Ford 550. \$13,000 OBO. 231-924-8994. (PT9)



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Bob Carlson (left) and Jerry Kirkpatrick answer your questions in Truck Corner.



The Efficient Rig, *Part I*

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QUESTION:

Q I've been in the pumping business a decade. I have had many occasions to talk to my colleagues and competitors about pump trucks. Everybody seems to have a different opinion on what a pump truck has to have on it to do the job. Some guys say you don't need vacuum or pressure relief valves. Some argue that a secondary moisture trap is unnecessary and a waste of money. You guys have built vacuum trucks for a long time and I suppose you've made repairs on them, too. What makes for the best vacuum truck? What do you need and what don't you need?

Hal Parker
Buffalo, N.Y.

ANSWER:

A The first thing we learned in this business, many years ago, is that every pumper has different priorities when it comes to vacuum truck operation. To be sure, there are a lot of opinions on how to make the "perfect" vacuum truck that will last nearly forever and be economical to run.

The best way to answer your all-encompassing question is to analyze the components of a vacuum truck and decide which ones are necessary. When all is said and done, you throw in your opinion and make the final decision.

First, obviously, you need a tank. It needs to be made of the proper materials — carbon steel, stainless steel or aluminum — and it needs to be made thick enough to withstand the forces of vacuum and pressure.

Second, the tank should be sized to fit the truck's load capacity. Don't put a tank that's too large on a small truck. And vice versa, don't undersize your tank in order to spare the truck.

There are guidelines based on weight that will help you choose the most efficient tank for your chassis.

Most manufacturers will tell you what your tank and the rest of the body will weigh when full. Add the weight of the truck to that weight, and see how close it comes to the Gross Vehicle Weight, or GVW, of the truck. If you decide that you'll be running with a load that exceeds your GVW, then you can start shopping for another truck chassis. That's the reason trucks are rated for their load.

Some vacuum truck buyers think they know better than Ford, Freightliner, Chevy and International and they are forever shopping trucks. And just a side note, they are usually complaining that the last truck they had wasn't built right and they'll never buy another one of those again. So they go to another brand, and overload it. I wish I could say I was joking about this, but I've seen it over and over.

The truck's vacuum pump should be sized to suit the tank. A lot of vacuum pump myths are still circulating in the industry. Some PROs think the bigger the pump, the more powerful the pump, so why not get a monster pump and let her rip? One of the first things to remember when it comes to vacuum pumps is that any size pump will create a vacuum inside the tank.

That's right. Any vacuum pump will do the job, so what's the difference between small vacuum pumps and large vacuum pumps? The small vacuum pump will simply take longer to evacuate the tank and create the vacuum you need to do the job. The extra time required to evacuate the tank will eventually shorten the life of the pump. The large vacuum pump will evacuate the tank quickly, but will cost you a good deal more money.

This business is about time and money. Vacuum pumps are built and designed in various sizes so that the pump you choose will be the most efficient by cost and functionality.



Next month, we'll continue to answer Hal's question by examining the accessories available for vacuum trucks and decide which of those we must have in order to have an efficient and economical rig.

Bob Carlson and Jerry Kirkpatrick of Arizona-based Glendale Welding have over 50 years combined experience dealing with portable sanitation truck issues. Fax questions to them, addressed to Truck Corner, at 623/937-3688, or send Bob and Jerry an e-mail at truckcorner@promonthly.com. ■

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