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Thinking Inside the Box

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TUFF-JON



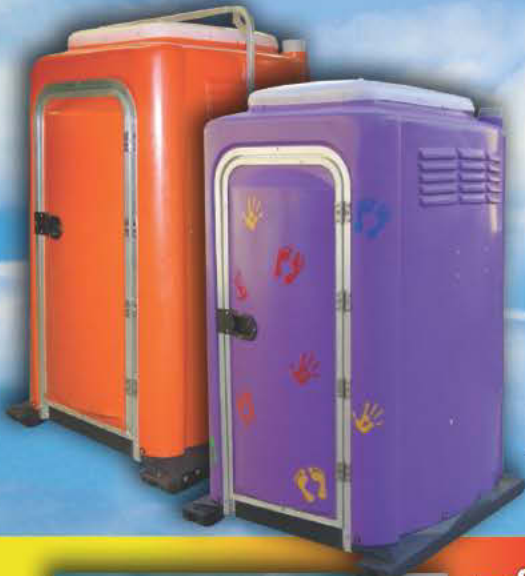
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What's inside a portable restroom? A captive audience with a smartphone and maybe a marketing opportunity.
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Profile: Thinking Inside the Box
Containers and related industrial site services add welcome diversification to Texas-based A-1 Rocket's thriving portable sanitation business.
- Seiche Sanders

ON THE COVER: Ryan and Mark Zimmer have overseen sustained growth for 20 years at their company, A-1 Rocket Portable Restrooms in Amarillo, Texas. Starting primarily by offering portable restrooms to their customers, the father and son team has diversified over the past two years to add fencing, barricades and containers to the service menu. (Photo by Michael Norris)

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Service With a Smile

WITH STIFF COMPETITION FOR CONTRACTS, EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AND EVER-MORE-DEMANDING CLIENTS, QUALITY CUSTOMER CARE MUST REMAIN A TOP GOAL. BUT HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE IT?

By Jim Kneiszel

The prospect of monitoring the customer service efforts of your employees might seem like herding cats. That was especially true for the past few months when you've been at your busiest and, in addition to your regular crew, you may have hired some summer help. You can reinforce the importance of quality customer service every day, but then workers go off in every direction on the job and you can't always watch for follow-through.

Who was doing what - and where - this past weekend when that customer called to complain about their restroom unit? Who handled the call and what was the outcome? Did someone follow through with the planner for your biggest special event of the year?

The endless questions over a lapse in good customer service can keep you awake at night. But rather than worry yourself into sleepless nights over how your customers were handled in the past, Ron Kaufman recommends creating a positive service culture that will stand you in good stead for the future.

The author of the book, *Uplifting Service: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet*, (Evolve Publishing) offers many "building blocks of a service culture" to ensure customers are treated well whether or not you're present to watch your employees at work.

Kaufman says poor service is rampant today and that it's time for companies to examine the best, most innovative practices used today to improve customer service.

"Service is everywhere," Kaufman says. "But there is a vast disconnect between the volume of service we need and the quality of service we are giving and receiving. Businesses have turned a very simple human concept into a catastrophic cliché. They remain blind to the fact that true service

comes not from demands and dashboards, but from a basic human desire to take care of other people."

Let's explore a few ways Kaufman says you can improve the service culture in your business:

"Each new hire either makes your culture stronger or makes your challenge to build a great service culture a little harder. The right people pull naturally in the right direction. While cultural misfits may be experienced in a specific area, their impact on the team can be confusing or downright disruptive."

- Ron Kaufman

Hire right.

If you experience continual customer service troubles, have you considered the problem might be who you're hiring more than how you're training? Kaufman advocates for hiring workers with the right attitude over those with the best set of skills for the job. He points to creative companies like tech giant Google and shoe e-tailer Zappos that have learned it's easier to start with employees who are receptive to a strong service message.

"Each new hire either makes your culture stronger or makes your challenge to build a great service culture a little harder," Kaufman says. "The right people pull naturally in the right direction. While cultural misfits may be experienced in a specific area, their impact on the team can be confusing or downright disruptive."

And a few employees who don't buy into the importance of great customer service can have a detrimental influence on everyone else on your team. How Zappos weeds out employees who don't accept their customer service message is intriguing. After four weeks of cross-training in the company's "Deliver WOW Through Service" philosophy, Zappos managers ask new hires if they'd like to opt out.

"If you think the culture isn't a perfect fit for you, the company will pay you for the hours you've put in so far, plus a cash bonus to leave now with a smile," Kaufman explains. "The amount started at \$100 and has since been raised to a whopping \$2,000. Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh is actually thinking of increasing it again because not enough people accept the opt-out offer. The point is not paying people to go, but making sure the right people choose to stay."

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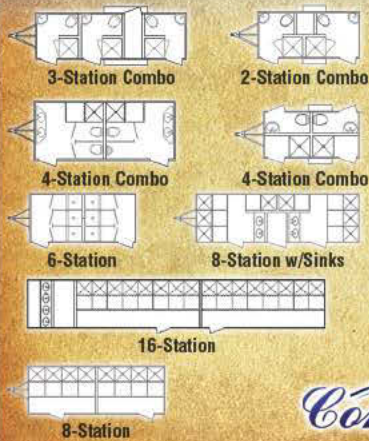
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Set clear expectations.

You can't expect employees to carry on your vision for customer service if you don't convey it to them - when they come to work for the first day and regularly thereafter. Too often a new employee is thrown into the fire because a heavy workload demands it. As Kaufman explains, it's typical for an employer to walk a new employee around the shop, show them the work tools, introduce a few co-workers and then tell them to get to work.

Rather, take the time to create a new-employee orientation program that lays out customer service expectations: how the phone will be answered, the procedure for responding to a complaint, to what lengths an employee is empowered to address a customer concern. Then follow up so nobody forgets service communications.

"Give voice to your customers' compliments and complaints," he says. "Service communications keep your people up-to-date with what's happening, what's changing, what's coming next, and most of all, what's needed now."

Show your appreciation.

We know what you do when a customer complains about how an employee treated them. But how do you react when a customer praises one of your employee's efforts? If you don't recognize a customer service win, that has to change.

Employee recognition can come in many forms, including bonuses for good work. However, Kaufman said money isn't always the most effective way to reward employees, and sometimes bonuses bring unintended consequences. He explained how a car dealership gave customer satisfaction bonuses, but when the economy forced the dealer to curtail that benefit, customer satisfaction fell off.

It's better to look for meaningful alternatives to cash, according to Kaufman.

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"Genuine appreciation fully expressed makes a more lasting impact on any employee," he adds. "And there are tons of great ways to reward and recognize. You can do it in public, in private, in person, in writing, for individuals or for teams. You can do it with a handwritten letter, a standing ovation, two tickets to a concert or a ball game, an extra day off, dinner for the family ... They can drive service commitment and behavior to even higher levels and are more memorable and emotional than simply receiving money."

Get out on the front lines.

How can you overcome the challenges to providing top-notch customer service if you're not in touch with operations? You need to get out of the office and get boots on the ground occasionally to assess how procedures are being followed, whether it's running a construction restroom route or pulling a service shift at your biggest special event of the season.

Kaufman explains how the general manager of an exclusive Paris hotel works as a bellman several times each year. He greets guests and hauls their luggage, all the while getting feedback about the hotel. He eats lunch with frontline workers and asks and answers questions about the job.

"He's the epitome of a service role model," Kaufman says. "But what's important to remember and to emphasize with your team is that everyone is a service role model. Leaders, managers and frontline staff must walk-the-talk with powerful personal actions every day." ■

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Have you successfully restored high standards of customer service in your company? Have you found a great way to motivate employees to go above and beyond for customers ... even when you're not looking over their shoulders? Share your tips with us by dropping me a line at editor@promonthly.com.

Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for 15 years 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.



QR Codes Market to Today's Customer

WHAT'S INSIDE A PORTABLE RESTROOM? A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE WITH A SMARTPHONE AND MAYBE A MARKETING OPPORTUNITY.

By Judy Kneiszel

Reading in the bathroom is a time-honored activity. People often keep magazines in their home bathrooms for guests to peruse, but that doesn't work in portable restrooms. Thank goodness technology has solved the problem through smartphones and QR codes.

What is a QR code and what can it do for you?

You've probably seen QR codes printed in newspapers, magazines, on product packaging, direct mail advertising, and many other places. QR stands for "Quick Response" and refers to those black and white squares that are really a two-dimensional barcode readable by a variety of devices

including smartphones. They were first used in Japanese automobile plants to track vehicles during the manufacturing process. QR codes are catching on worldwide as a marketing tool because they allow content to be decoded at high speeds by anyone who has a mobile phone equipped with a camera or a smartphone.

The amount of information that can be contained in a QR code is about 4,300 characters. That's enough for a business professional to include contact information and some personal background or product information, which is more than will fit on a standard business card. They also can be used as a link to a website.

Newer smartphones come with QR code readers installed. If a phone doesn't have one installed, a reader can be downloaded for free from Google Goggles, or on an iPhone, the App Store.

Once the QR code reader app is installed, the user simply activates it and takes a quick snapshot of the data label and is instantly seeing what you want them to see, which could be your contact information, or a specific company promotion like a coupon.

How to Create QR Codes

You can program a QR code to open your company website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or a YouTube video. You can stick to information specifically pertaining to your company or you can link to a YouTube video selected to amuse your captive audience.

If you'd like to use QR codes on marketing materials, the technology for creating them is usually free. Dozens of Web services will create them for you for a fee.

Websites such as Delivr.com, qrcode.kaywa.com, QRifier.com, QR.net and QRStuff.com make it easy for even small-business owners to get onboard by generating QR codes.

A great way to get started is to go to code generating websites. Most provide introductory information on QR codes. Here are some questions to consider when choosing a QR code generator:

1. Does it seem easy to use?
2. Will it create QR codes for almost all smartphones?
3. Does it allow you to condense a URL? A shortened URL is a forwarding address that redirects to your target URL. A short URL means less content has to be encoded and the QR code can be printed smaller.
4. Is it able to create QR codes in different file formats: jpg, png, pdf, eps, etc.?

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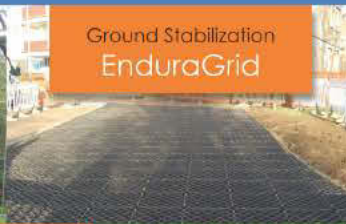
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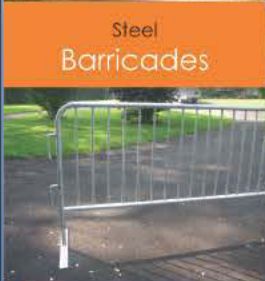
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5. Will it embed html code? This allows you to put QR codes on a website.
6. Does it offer storage and indexing of codes so you can find them when you need them?
7. Does it offer tracking and analytics so you know how often the codes are being scanned?
8. Is it free? You should be able to do all of the above for free.

How and Where to Use QR Codes

Once you've learned to scan and generate QR codes, you can get creative about where and how to use them.

I implied earlier that QR coding could be printed on stickers and placed inside portable restrooms so users could scan the code and read your website content or watch a video while utilizing the restroom.

Jamie Pepper, marketing administrator at English Septic in Bridgeton, N.J., has placed QR codes almost everywhere but inside portable restrooms. The septic pumping and portable restroom company does, however, have QR codes on ads in restroom stalls inside a local stadium.

Pepper says once people learn what QR codes are and how to use them, they become a quick, easy, effective, inexpensive direct marketing strategy a company can pinpoint and track. To help English Septic's customers along, Pepper wrote a brief article explaining QR codes and posted it on the company's website: www.englishseptic.com/qr-codes.php.

English Septic has added QR codes to just about all of its marketing efforts including newspaper ads, phone book ads, restaurant placemat ads, and company brochures. Some codes send people to the English Septic

website, others to the company's Facebook page. English Septic also has created QR codes that go right to a discount coupon, which, Pepper says, customers don't even have to print out to take advantage of. They can just show drivers the coupon on their phone.

"At first it was a little touch and go, but because there's no cost to it (QR codes) at all, we could stick with it. After people started getting familiar with it, it took off very quickly."

- Jamie Pepper

GAINING TRACTION

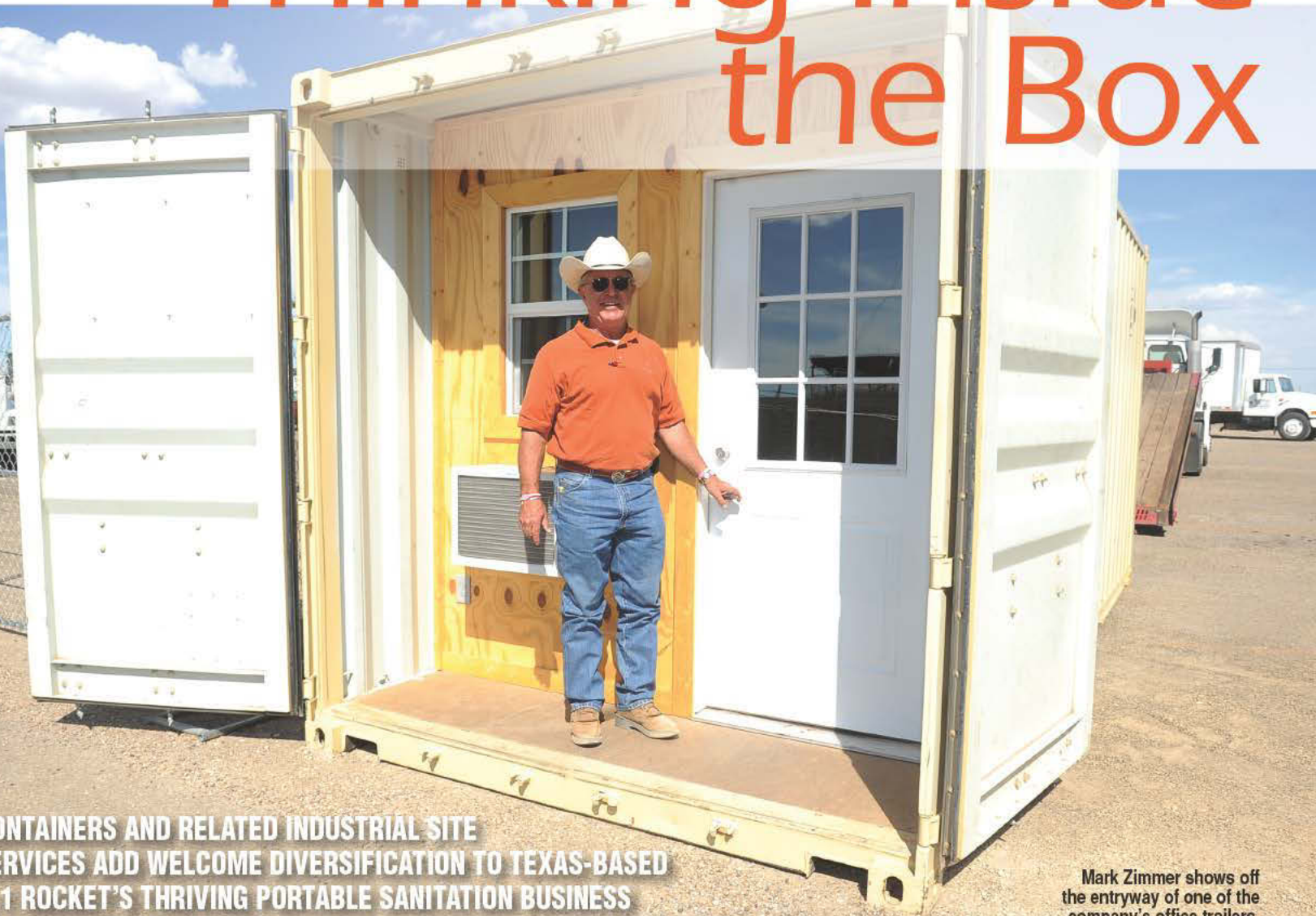
"Every month I review our marketing efforts, and wherever the return on investment isn't up to par, that's what I try to push people toward, whether it's Facebook, Twitter or the website," Pepper says.

English Septic has been using QR codes for about a year.

"At first it was a little touch and go, but because there's no cost to it at all, we could stick with it," she says. "After people started getting familiar with it, it took off very quickly."

A marketing tool that's flexible, inexpensive and effective seems like a win-win for any small business. If you're seeing QR codes in more and more places in your area, maybe it's time to try using them yourself to promote your portable restroom operation. ■

Thinking Inside the Box



CONTAINERS AND RELATED INDUSTRIAL SITE SERVICES ADD WELCOME DIVERSIFICATION TO TEXAS-BASED A-1 ROCKET'S THRIVING PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS

By Seiche Sanders

Mark Zimmer shows off the entryway of one of the company's office trailers. (Photography by Michael Norris)

A-1 Rocket Portable Restrooms, Amarillo, Texas

Owners: Mark, Jill and Ryan Zimmer

Employees: 13

A-1 Rocket: 80- to 100-mile radius of Amarillo

American Portable Storage: 250-mile radius of Amarillo

Scott Box: 150-mile radius of Lubbock, Texas

A-1 Rocket of South Texas: 150-mile radius of Floresville, Texas

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Websites: www.a1rocket.com, www.aps-amarillo.com and www.scottboxtexas.com

Affiliations: Portable Sanitation Association International, Chamber of Commerce in Amarillo and Canyon, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Associated General Contractors of America, National Portable Storage Association, Center City-Amarillo, Texas



Sustained, consistent growth for 20-plus years is more than most business owners can hope for. And explosive growth, well, that's something reserved for wish lists and sweet dreams, right?

Not so for Mark Zimmer and his company, A-1 Rocket Portable Restrooms in Amarillo, Texas. In the past two years, the company has diversified from primarily a portable restroom provider to a full-blown site services contractor for construction and other industries.

A-1 Rocket has acquired two companies and expanded to offer fencing and barricades, and, most notably, has seen its container business bloom. Modified containers are used for anything from construction project offices to temporary storage facilities to mobile kitchens. They have proven to be a profitable add-on to traditional restroom services and now account for 20 percent of total business.

So what was the catalyst for Zimmer to step into new markets after running an established business for many years? Many changes over the

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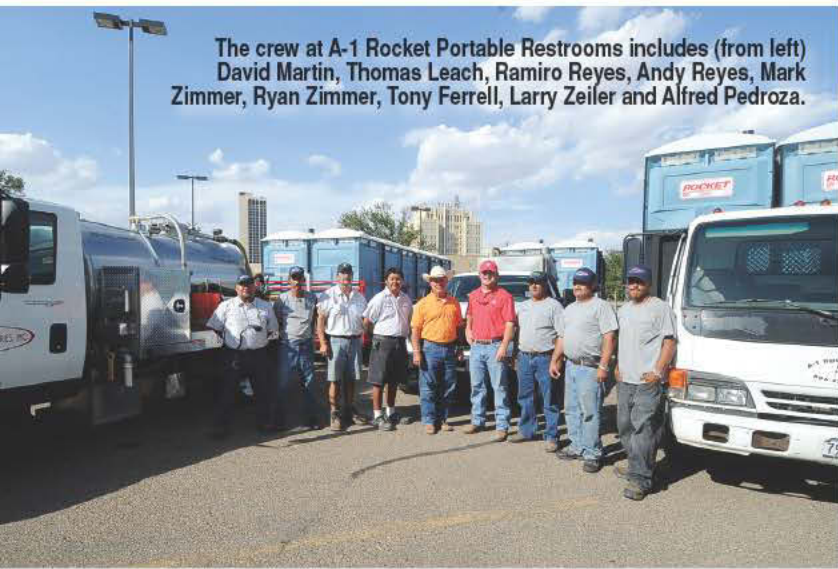
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The crew at A-1 Rocket Portable Restrooms includes (from left) David Martin, Thomas Leach, Ramiro Reyes, Andy Reyes, Mark Zimmer, Ryan Zimmer, Tony Ferrell, Larry Zeiler and Alfred Pedroza.



past two years are attributable to Zimmer's son, Ryan, joining the A-1 Rocket Portable Restrooms team. Ryan grew up in the family business – servicing restrooms with his dad at special events by the time he was 8 – but went on to become a civil engineer and worked for a construction company before deciding to return to his roots.

Ryan, now the company's vice president, brought A-1 Rocket a fresh perspective on new opportunities in the construction industry, as well as a fierce commitment to networking and finding solutions customers want. The company now provides portable restrooms, fencing and containers for construction sites and special events throughout the state. It also expanded its reach 500 miles south, where a new branch is offering products to oil and gas companies near San Antonio.

"It's amazed me from the start. A lot of times Ryan will field 20 calls a day from businesses that want extra storage – something airtight and watertight – and storage for their tools or when they're remodeling."

MARK ZIMMER

CONTAINED EXCITEMENT

Mark Zimmer, the company's president, built a foundation in portable sanitation with A-1 Rocket, which continues to operate within a 100-mile radius of Amarillo in the Texas panhandle. He grew from an initial 100 restrooms to 500, catering mainly to special events customers. Most of the units are from Satellite Industries. A handful come from PolyJohn Enterprises, and the company's 24-foot restroom trailer is from Olympia Fiberglass Industries Inc. Restroom rentals account for 70 percent of revenue.

Enter Ryan, who during his time as an engineer had witnessed a growing and specific demand for containers at construction sites. Mark recognized the risk, but knew it was an educated one, so they started by ordering four units. Neither father nor son had any idea just how strong demand would be. Today their container inventory is around 250, amassed in the past two years and with the acquisition of a couple smaller businesses.

"It's amazed me from the start. A lot of times Ryan will field 20 calls a day from businesses that want extra storage – something airtight and watertight – and storage for their tools or when they're remodeling," Zimmer says.

Once, he says, a motel had 15 of them to store furnishings during a remodeling project. The uses have been countless and the units are relatively easy to service.

"We drop them off, forget them, and pick them up at the end of the job. There's no need to put them on a route," Ryan says. A 20-foot unit rents for about \$100-\$125 per month with a delivery and mileage fee.

The company offers several different configurations, can install heat, air conditioning and running water, and rents them to construction sites, schools, oil and mining fields, golf courses, hospitality and other industries.

"You don't really realize what people do with them, but we've had everyone from ranchers to people who really want secure storage. They like them on the ground where you can walk into them. They're different than the boxes you see on the trailer rigs. Ours weigh two to three times more and the top is made of the same things as the sides, so they're heavy duty."

The fact they're new – shiny and well painted – also helps, according to Zimmer.

CONTAINERS TAKE OFF

Marketing was key even before the first four containers were delivered, Mark says. "Before we got them, we were advertising them and had them all rented out before he came here, and that caused us to buy more." The company has since acquired two businesses that have fed into the 250-strong fleet of 20- and 40-foot models. Ryan sources the containers – made of 14-gauge corrugated steel with 1-inch marine grade plywood floors – from wholesalers across the nation.

These wind and watertight containers often come from Dallas or Houston, both hundreds of miles away but still the closest ports. They are transported to Amarillo via truck. They also stock some newer models for retail jobs where they're more visible to the public.

More inventory means more work to be done. "With the addition of the container service and the new business in South Texas, we've added six employees in the past year and a half, and as far as vehicles, we've added five," Mark says. In the past year and a half, company revenues have doubled.

The company's fleet in Amarillo now includes a 2006 International 4300 with a 1,000-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater steel tank; 2011 and 2012 International TerraStars with 700-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater stainless steel tanks; a 2006 GMC 5500 flatbed truck with Waltco Lift Corp. liftgate and 400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank; a 2006 GMC 4500 with 600-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank; and a 2010 GMC flatbed pickup with 300-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank. All the vacuum trucks were built out by Best Enterprises Inc. In addition, the company runs a 1999 Isuzu NPR with 16-foot



Andy Reyes (left) and his brother Ramiro Reyes set up restrooms for a block party in Amarillo.

stake bed and Waltco Lift Corp. liftgate, a 2000 GMC pickup with Tommy Lift liftgate and 20- and 24-foot restroom trailers from Custom Built Trailer Inc., Lubbock, Texas.

The satellite office, A-1 Rocket of South Texas, has a 2010 GMC 1-ton flatbed with a 400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater tank; a 2011 Chevy 1-ton flatbed with a 400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank, both from Best Enterprises, and two 24-unit transport trailers from Custom Built Trailer Inc; 15 trash trailers and 10 custom-built cool-break trailers.

The cool-break units are flatbed trailers with a roof, benches and a Port-A-Cool portable evaporative cooling unit for workers seeking relief from the heat. They are usually 20 degrees cooler than the outside temperature. These trailers are fabricated and outfitted by Ryan and a friend with the help of Tumbleweed Manufacturing in Amarillo, Texas.

The company's other business units, American Portable Storage LLC, or APS, and Scott Box LLC, were acquired and added to the container fleet. APS Amarillo has a 1999 Sterling tractor; and 24-foot and 40-foot trailers from R & R Truck and Trailer Service, Citronelle, Ala., and 42-foot tilt container trailer from Contral, Marietta, Ga. These pull double duty hauling 20 restrooms each for large events.

And Scott Box has a 1999 International tractor and 42-foot Landoll Corp. container tilt trailer, and two 2012 Freightliner M2 tractors.

HEADED SOUTH

The company's newest branch, A-1 Rocket of South Texas, sprang up in part to serve the oil and gas industries in that region. One impetus was

Jerry Don Thompson, who sold APS to the Zimmers, and owns a pipeline construction company in South Texas.

"(Thompson) said he wanted us to supply him and that would lead to other people," Zimmer says. "So we moved some units [portable restrooms] from Amarillo, bought some and bought two trucks, and we now provide trash trailers for these drilling sites." This location has two employees and a manager and maintains 130 restrooms.

Ryan recalls the genesis of the new business: "A friend, Roy Baring, who is now manager, called me on a Tuesday wanting to do something with the big oil field play down there - he didn't care what it was. On Wednesday some guy wanted to buy toilets, and Thursday Thompson said he thought it would be a good time to bring some restrooms down."

(continued)

Zimmers believe in hands-on container build-outs

Ryan Zimmer is a good example of how being handy comes in handy. His family's container business is the beneficiary of the myriad of skills he and a friend possess to weld, frame, run electrical and finish out the units they rent to construction and other industries.

After investing the initial \$3,500 for a 20-foot container and another \$3,000 for shipping it to Amarillo, another \$3,000 or so goes into putting in amenities like air conditioning, electric service and insulation. You might expect Zimmer and his friend Sean Fuqua take on the work to save money, but surprisingly it costs more to build out the containers than to buy manufacturer kits.

"I am spending about 30 percent more on materials than a pre-made kit, but the control and peace of mind knowing I'm building it how I want it is worth it," Zimmer says.

When A-1 Rocket entered the container business, Zimmer treated each new unit as a construction project, subcontracting much of the work - and micromanaging the contractors on top of it.

"Then I was talking to my good friend, (Fuqua), who is an architect who grew up framing houses for his dad, and we decided to do all the work ourselves," Zimmer says. Working from a barn near the company shop, he and Fuqua are able to build out four 20-foot units at a time.

"We have a welding shop down the street and we do the welding, framing and electrical work," Zimmer explains. "Growing up here, I learned to weld and cut. Fuqua frames the units and we wire and sheet them and they're done."

Zimmer says the containers return the investment in purchase and build-out in about 48 months.

"In our situation, the two of us doing the work is best. We each have unique skill sets that complement each other to get the job done. It does take us longer to build one out ourselves, but we know it is done the way we want it." Zimmer says.





MORE INFO

Best Enterprises, Inc.
800/288-2378
www.bestenterprises.net

PolyJohn Enterprises
800/292-1305
www.polyjohn.com
(See ad page 35)

Satellite Industries
800/328-3332
www.satelliteindustries.com
(See ad pages 18-19)

At a local festival, concertgoers look on with A-1 Rocket's Satellite Tufway restrooms set up in the background.

The three developments signaled a new opportunity for A-1 Rocket. "We only have a few clients down there but they're running so many crews we're able to follow them around," Ryan adds.

"We have that synergy. He's got the well established companies and the old-school mindset. I bring in the new (ideas) and want to be more efficient."

RYAN ZIMMER

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

The sudden expansion beyond A-1 Rocket's original territory called for changes to the company's business structure. After buying the smaller businesses, the Zimmers consulted with lawyers and accountants to pool each separate business - A-1 Rocket of South Texas, Scott Box, and American Portable Storage - into one LLC to protect the assets of each. Zimmer's wife, Jill, also is part owner and secretary.

The challenges of running businesses across long distances and paying for the investments they've made have kept the Zimmers busy. "I joked with my dad that I spent all the money he made in 22 years of business in one year," Ryan says.

So far, the dynamic works, father and son agree. "We have that synergy," Ryan explains. "He's got the well established companies and the old-school mindset. I bring in the new (ideas) and want to be more efficient."

"We talk a lot and exchange ideas," Ryan continues. "He has the experience and we're sounding boards for each other. And it works pretty well."

Mark says the father-son alliance is a meeting of the minds and resources. "I had the money, and he had the ideas," he says. But it was still very important for Mark to stress the foundation on which the business is built. "I made it very clear that how we've made the money was through the portable restrooms, and I would remind him this is how we paid the bills." ■

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On the Job

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By Ed Wodalski

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LOCK AMERICA INTERNATIONAL

Restroom padlocks from Lock America International, designed to prevent against theft and vandalism, are available in a choice of five colors to match units or indicate restrooms are



Portable office trailers, lightweight barricades and water-handling pumps can be a profitable addition to your special event and construction site services. Adding a color-coded padlock can save time when sorting restrooms, while special response equipment can put you first on the scene or add extra value when supporting emergency response efforts. Here are a few time-saving, profit-building products to consider.

ready for service, need cleaning or might be assigned to specific events. Easily re-keyable, locks have solid brass bodies and chrome shackles for rust prevention. **800/422-2866; www.lalgroup.com.**

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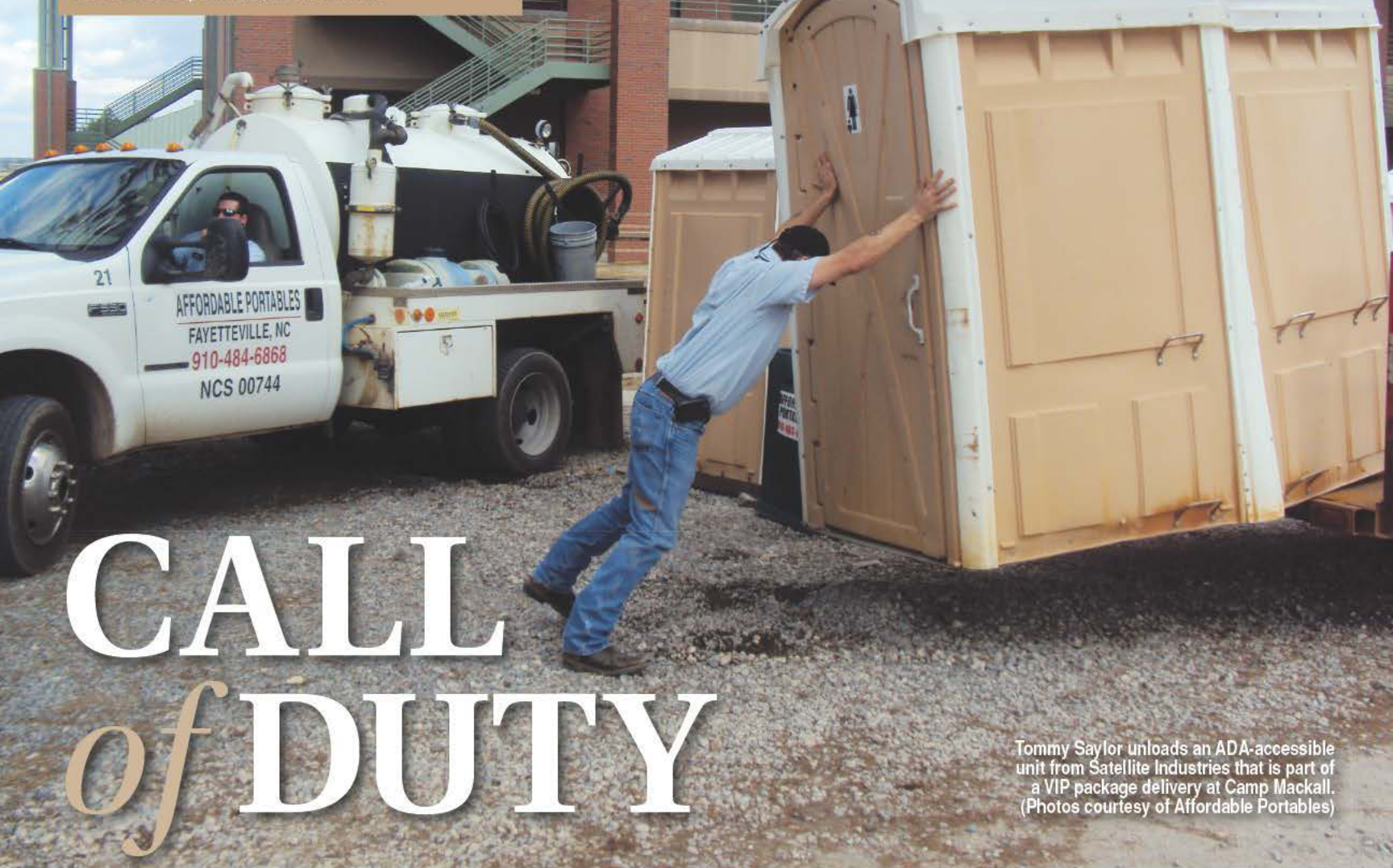
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ON LOCATION

THE PRO: Affordable Portables LLC of Cumberland County

THE JOB: Army Special Forces Training Camp

LOCATION: Camp Mackall, North Carolina



CALL *of* DUTY

Tommy Saylor unloads an ADA-accessible unit from Satellite Industries that is part of a VIP package delivery at Camp Mackall. (Photos courtesy of Affordable Portables)

THE CREW AT NORTH CAROLINA'S AFFORDABLE PORTABLES PROVIDES AID AND COMFORT TO U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES TRAINEES AT CAMP MACKALL

By Betty Dageforde

THE TEAM

Tommy Saylor oversees the operations of Affordable Portables LLC of Cumberland County for owner Joe Gillis. They're located in Fayetteville, N.C., with a supplemental holding yard in Rock Fish, N.C. His team consists of eight vacuum truck drivers, two delivery drivers, a mechanic and three office personnel, although everyone is cross-trained to step in wherever needed. Technicians Kris Kader and Michael Lancaster Jr. are assigned full time to Camp Mackall.

COMPANY HISTORY

Eight years ago, when a friend of Gillis put his portable sanitation business up for sale, Gillis hooked up with a partner and bought it, as well as three other restroom companies. Saylor stepped in as operations manager in 2009 when the partner left the business.

Today they've got about 3,500 portable restrooms in their inventory, and 12 service vehicles ranging in size from 500 gallons to 1,700 gallons. Their territory covers eight counties within a 50-mile radius. About 50 percent of their work is for the military, especially nearby Fort Bragg. The rest of their work is construction and special events - including a charity event for Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, for which the company donated units as well as their time.

"They're very happy with us. We respond to all their needs. They've got my number to call 24 hours a day."

TOMMY SAYLOR

(continued)

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Operations manager Tommy Saylor (center) is flanked by his crew at Camp Mackall, Michael Lancaster Jr. (left) and Kris Kader.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The contract with Camp Mackall was held by one of the original companies Gillis bought and was transferred to him. The company has kept up with the growth at the camp and those contracts have been renewed. "They're very happy with us," Saylor says. "We respond to all their needs. They've got my number to call 24 hours a day."

THE MAIN EVENT

Camp Mackall, on the outskirts of Fort Bragg, is a former military base named for Pvt. John Thomas Mackall, who was killed in the Allied Invasion of North Africa during World War II. It is now set up as a training camp to prepare Special Forces for combat duty. Up to 500 trainees come in at a time for a two-week stay. They participate in training activities that include classroom instruction, running obstacle courses, role-playing and camping in the woods. Cadets also are exposed to the living conditions, music and even animals of the Middle East to become familiar with the sights, sounds and smells they will encounter when deployed.

THE JOB

Conditions at the camp are deliberately rugged for the trainees to cull unsuitable candidates. They live in tents, and although they have showers, the only sanitary facilities are portable restrooms. Hand-wash stations are where they brush their teeth, shave and clean up between showers.

Affordable Portables also provides units for construction activity, as the camp is expanding its facilities.

BY THE NUMBERS

There are currently 200 units at Camp Mackall, 160 of which are Global models from Satellite Industries. Per Fort Bragg requirements, units in training areas must be tan. There are no color requirements for the backwoods or construction sites, so the 40 Satellite Industries Tufways in those areas are the company's standard dark green. The company also supplied 32 PolyPortables Inc. Super Twin hand-wash stations.

When officers are in attendance for award ceremonies or other special events, the company brings in handicap-accessible units as well as flushable Global 1.5 models with sinks. Deliveries are made with a Chevrolet 2500 and trailers built by Gillis or Master Tow Inc.

Units are set up in 20 locations around the camp, including three tent cities, three security gates, training and backwoods areas and construction

zones. The company also has an on-site holding yard where they store about 25 units that might be needed. Units are sited by a grid number to pinpoint them on a military map.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Camp Mackall has several vendor requirements. Saylor and his technicians had to go through background checks to gain security clearance. Drivers are required to wear company uniforms with shirts tucked in. And all vehicles must be four-wheel drive.

The company also has requirements. Drivers must wear steel-toed boots, safety glasses and rubber latex gloves, and go through regular drug testing.

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

During training sessions, Kader and Lancaster make the 100-mile round trip to Camp Mackall to clean all the units five days a week - sometimes seven, Saylor says. Each drives a 2003 Ford F-550 with 750-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank built out by Abernethy Welding and a Masport pump. There are three points at the camp where they can replenish their water supply. Waste is taken to the county wastewater treatment plant.



Driver Kris Kader prepares to strap a Satellite Industries restroom to his truck's carrier for a trip back to the Affordable Portables yard.

(continued)

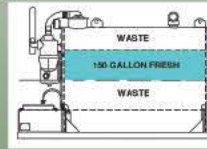
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Between training sessions, units remain in place and one of the drivers checks on them three times a week. This break provides an opportunity to do a more thorough cleaning, readying the units for the next session. The company uses Satellite Industries deodorizer and cabana spray.

JOB BENEFITS

The company and the military have enjoyed a mutually beneficial working relationship for many years. But the drivers enjoy a few perks as



Tommy Saylor places a PolyPortables Inc. hand-wash station at the Special Forces training camp in North Carolina.

“They’re letting my guys eat out at the chow hall with the students, the instructors, the top-ranking people. And they let them shop at the PX store if they need drinks or anything.”

TOMMY SAYLOR

well. “They’re letting my guys eat out at the chow hall with the students, the instructors, the top-ranking people,” Saylor says. “And they let them shop at the PX store if they need drinks or anything.”

The cadets benefit, as well. They’re very respectful because they know the drivers are there to provide clean restrooms for them, Saylor says. “They’re very patient. They’ll wait for the cleaning to be done, then ask if they’re allowed to use them.”

The company expects to continue this longstanding contract, and has begun discussions regarding future requirements. ■

MORE INFO

Abernethy Welding & Repair, Inc.
800/545-0324
www.abernethywelding.com

Masport, Inc.
800/228-4510
www.masportpump.com

PolyPortables, Inc.
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Jack Brown

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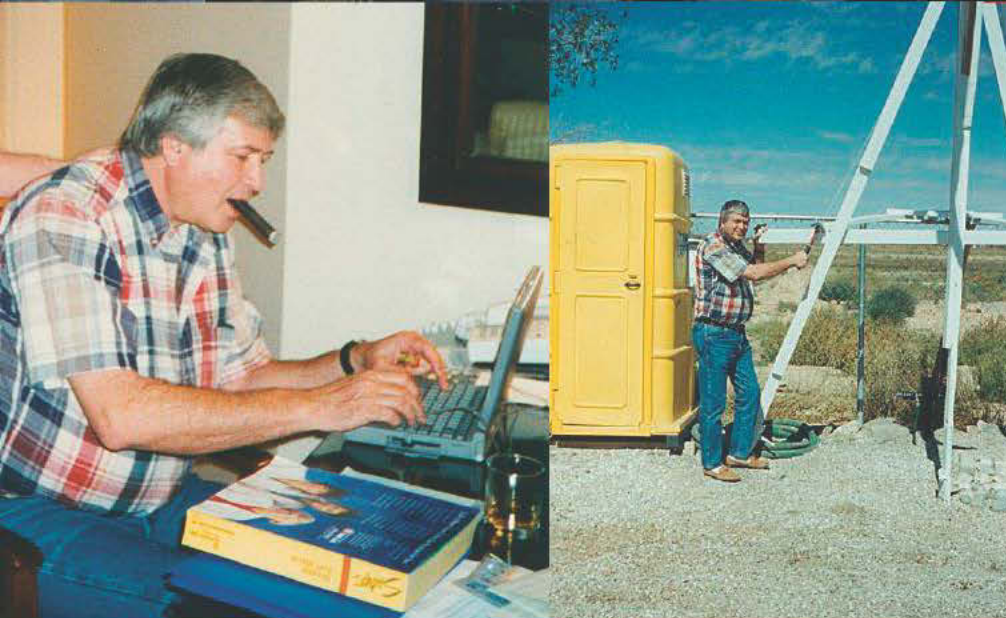


Jack Brown was in the portable toilet business for over 25 years, starting as a small single truck operator, with 20 toilets in the early 1980's. During the proceeding decades Jack grew his portable toilet company from 20 portable toilets to a company that operated in 5 states with over 10,000 portable toilets. During that time, he grew to love the people associated with the industry and made many lifelong friends. Jack had great knowledge of the portable toilet business and he cared about the small business operator and the future of small business growth and development. Through running and operating a successful and constantly expanding portable toilet company, Jack understood the need for a better way to manage the daily operations of the portable toilet business other than manually tracking services using yellow legal pads, which often resulted in errors. Jack developed a software program that would increase his effectiveness and efficiency by keeping track of equipment, employees, services and billing.

In 2004, Jack started a company called **EZTrakR Systems, Inc.** to offer his software program to the small business operator at an affordable price without them needing to invest large amounts of money. EZTrakR was the first marketed software system written by an actual portable toilet operator with decades of experience in the industry. EZTrakR was designed as a one-stop solution for any portable toilet operator to manage all aspects of their business.

On the afternoon of July 8, 2012, Jack was involved in an automobile accident that resulted in his death. Jack's two step sons remain in the industry and continue his legacy as small business operators. Jack's wife, Elaine, will continue the development and operation of EZTrakR so that his passion for the industry continues through others.

Jack loved the portable toilet industry and often remarked about how much fun he had working with others in the industry. Jack will be so greatly missed by his family and friends, but his memories and lessons will carry on for decades to come.



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Protect Your Name

WHETHER YOUR COMPANY'S HANDLE IS A CLEVER PLAY ON WORDS OR USES A COMMON SURNAME, CONSIDER MEASURES TO PROTECT AN IMPORTANT SMALL BUSINESS IDENTITY

By Fred S. Steingold

Microsoft. Starbucks. Walmart. They're all memorable names. You can bet those companies made sure they had exclusive rights to their names.

Your business name might not be as distinctive or well known. Still, you'd hate to have a judge tell you that you can't use it anymore. And if another business copied your name, you'd like to be able to go into court and put a stop to it.

So how do you protect the name of your business, product or service? We'll look at a few techniques. But, ultimately, only you and your lawyer can decide how much effort and expense to invest in name protection. Your decision will depend on many factors, including the size of your business, the size of the market you serve, the type of product or service you offer and your expectation for growth and expansion.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS

Generally, the more customers your business will reach, the more you need to be sure you have exclusive rights to your chosen name. Joe, who runs a local computer repair service, won't need as much name protection as Alicia who plans to sell a new line of iPad cases in all 50 states.

Obviously, the Internet is a major factor. It's caused a rapid growth in the number of small and mid-sized businesses that compete with one another. How does this affect you? It means you may have a greater need than in the past to do in-depth name searches - and perhaps to seek trademark protection.

Let's start by focusing on the simplest situation - a very small local business that probably needs to do nothing more than meet a few requirements of state law. For example:

Jeff wants to start a local photography studio called *Portraits by Jeff*. He'll be a sole proprietor. Since his is a small, unincorporated local business, he's probably safe enough if he just registers his business name at the county level. (Some states require registration at the state level - and publishing the name in a newspaper.) Jeff probably doesn't need to spend time and money to register the name as a trademark or service mark. He should, however, check to be sure there are no other photography studios in his area using the same or a similar name.

If Jeff decides to incorporate his business or form a limited liability company, he'll need to make sure the business name contains the right additions (such as Inc. or LLC). He'll also need to be sure the name doesn't conflict with that of other corporations or LLCs in his state. The corporate filing office can probably check this out for Jeff in advance. The cost, if anything, will be minimal.

SIZE MATTERS

But be aware of this important fact: having the state accept your corporate or LLC name doesn't give you the protection of a trademark.

Still, in most cases, if you have a small local business that uses your name or a very common name to market goods and services locally, you can pretty safely ignore trademark concerns. So if you call your business *Harvey Walker Roof Repair*, you're not likely to have a trademark problem. Or if yours is a one-person, home-based business such as a graphic design service *A+ Design*, you're probably safe as well.

But if your business is bigger, such as a large camping equipment store (*Wilderness Outfitters*) or sells goods or services beyond a very local or industry specific niche (*Lamps.com Online Lamp Store*), I recommend that you look into trademark protection. Here's why:

You don't want to buy signs, stationery and ads and then get a nasty letter from a large company that claims a right to the name you're using and threatens you with a trademark infringement lawsuit.

Just defending such a case in federal court can cost you up to \$100,000. Even if you're sure that you're in the legal right, you'll probably wind up changing your business name just to duck the lawsuit.

FOR MAXIMUM PROTECTION

If name protection is important to your business, you'll get the maximum protection by obtaining a trademark if you sell a product - or by getting a service mark if you sell a service.

A trademark is a word, phrase, design or symbol that identifies a product brand. Examples include Dell computers, Nike shoes, Kodak cameras and Marathon gasoline.

A service mark is a word, phrase design or symbol that identifies the provider of a service. Examples are Burger King (fast foods), Roto-Rooter (sewer-drain service), Kinko's (copy centers) and Hertz (car rentals).

To properly register a trademark or service mark, you'll probably need help from a lawyer who specializes in intellectual property law. But if you're a do-it-yourself type, you can save money by doing some of the preliminary work - including conducting a search of existing names that have been registered. For guidance on how to do this, read *Trademark: Legal Care for Your Business & Product Name* by Richard Stim and Stephen Elias.

From a legal protection standpoint, the best trademarks are coined words, such as Kodak or Yuban. Or try for an arbitrary word - such as Arrow for shirts or Apple for computers - that has nothing to do with the product. Nearly as good are suggestive trademarks - ones that hint at some aspect of the product. For example, Talon suggests the gripping power of a zipper.

Even if you don't seek full-fledged trademark protection, it helps to conduct a national name search. That way, you'll avoid stepping on someone's toes. Professional search firms typically charge between \$150 and \$300 for each name searched. ■

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Bob Carlson is author of Pumper 101: The Complete Guide to Owning and Operating a Vacuum Truck and has spent many years building and repairing trucks for the portable sanitation industry. Send questions for Carlson to truckcorner@promonthly.com.



Know the Hose

JUST LIKE THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS IN YOUR PUMP SYSTEM, IT PAYS TO KNOW THE PERFORMANCE CAPABILITIES OF ALL OF YOUR TRUCK'S HOSES

By Bob Carlson

QUESTION: The 2-inch suction hose that came with my used truck is collapsing at the worst moments, not that there would ever be a good time to collapse. What do I need to know about suction hoses that'll keep me pumping?

Roger Schultz
Memphis, Tenn.

A good quality vacuum hose will have a strong, wire reinforcement wound throughout from beginning to end. And as time goes on, the reinforced hose can weaken, and like anything else, it's time to replace it.

ANSWER: Like anything else in the market today, there is good stuff and there is not-so-good stuff. Then you throw in the old adage, "You get what you pay for." But what you need is a 2-inch reinforced vacuum hose. A good quality vacuum hose will have a strong, wire reinforcement wound throughout from beginning to end. And as time goes on, the reinforced hose can weaken, and like anything else, it's time to replace it.

A variety of hose dealers and manufacturers provide good products. Talk to them and get educated as much as possible about your choices. I'm sure your hose distributor will be more than happy to come out and sell you a hose that won't collapse at the worst moment.

Not only should your suction hose from the wand to the truck be reinforced, but make sure your connection from the primary to the secondary, and the secondary to the pump is reinforced hose. When your hose collapses in any of these points, your system will not function. If you use the right hoses on your truck, you'll keep pumping efficiently and making money.

Look to the transmission

QUESTION: The vacuum system on my truck is powered by an auxiliary engine-driven pump. I don't have any complaints about the unit, but I'd like to convert my vacuum system to a PTO drive. How do I complete the conversion?

Ned Harper
Savannah, Ga.

ANSWER: It's possible you have an engine-driven system because there is no auxiliary port on the transmission. To install a PTO system on your truck, the transmission must have a port to hook up the PTO. To find out if you have a port, you'll have to crawl under the truck and take a look. If it does not have that port, then one cannot be added. In that case, stick to your engine-driven system and look to get a PTO system on your next truck.

Don't forget the oil catch muffler

QUESTION: I notice the oil catch muffler on my truck is the last thing in the pumping system. It comes after the pump, so does that mean it's not needed?

Tom Durant
Little Rock, Ark.

ANSWER: The oil catch muffler is the last piece of the puzzle because it catches (as its name indicates) excess oil thrown off by the pump. The pump has an oiler that lubricates the rotor as it spins at a high rate and the vanes slide against the inside of the pump. Obviously, without the oil the vanes cause the pump to overheat and threaten the pump's performance and longevity.

Just a side note: Make sure you are using the oil that is prescribed by the manufacturer. Not all pumps use the same oil.

The oil doesn't stay in the pump forever and it passes to the oil catch muffler. In this day and age of carefully scrutinized environmental regulations, even the smallest amount of oil spilled on the ground is prohibited. This makes the oil catch muffler a vital part to the overall vacuum system.

And while you're paying attention to the oil catch muffler, don't forget to empty the oil in the appropriate container and dispose of it in a legal way as required in your local area. Make sure you know the regulations for your area.

If you don't empty the oil every day, you'll be headed for trouble. Just like emptying the secondary everyday, to forget this step means trouble. The oil catch muffler only holds so much oil, and like the secondary, it is nothing but trouble when full.

The best time to empty the oil catch muffler is at the end of the workday. It's too easy to forget the procedure in the morning, when employees get to work and are ready to hit the road. ■

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Lechler publishes spray product catalog

The Lechler Catalog 500 features spray products and accessories as well as information on spray system design, material options, conversion tables, product differentiation and a new section on lances and nozzle headers. The catalog can be downloaded at www.lechlerusa.com.

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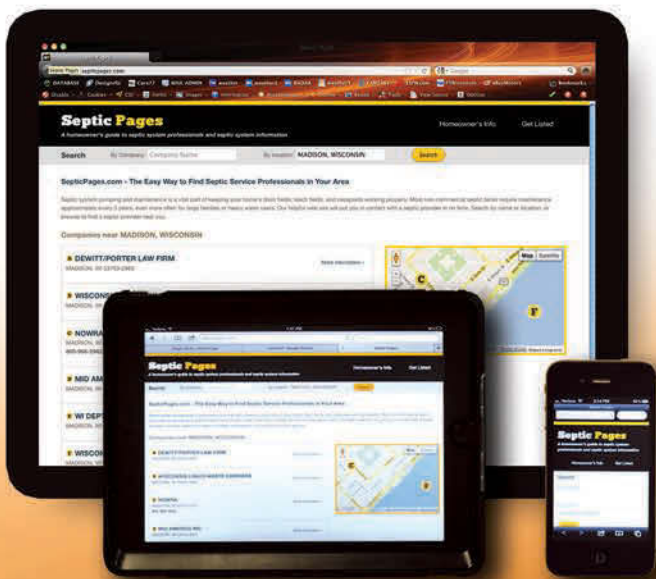
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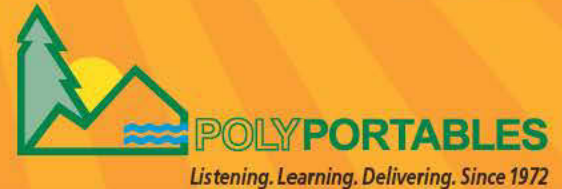
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