

# PRO

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## Pathway to Profits

Government contracts and quick-paying customers buoy Georgia's A-OK Portables

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## The AMAZING RACE

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**ON THE COVER:** Mark and Lee Insley, owners of A-OK Portables LLC in Warner Robins, Ga., took over the company in 2007 with a disastrous economy looming on the horizon. Several years later, the couple is looking forward to a bright future in the portable sanitation industry. (Photo by Grant Blankenship)

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# A Strategy for Sales

**SHRUG OFF THE LATE-WINTER BLAHS AND EMPLOY SOME NETWORKING TOOLS TO REEL IN A NEW SPECIAL-EVENT CUSTOMER**

By Jim Kneiszel

**M**any of you — especially if you're located north of the Mason-Dixon line — have been hibernating the past few months. Hopefully you emerged from climate-imposed slumber long enough to join me at the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo last month. But as you pull this magazine out of your mailbox, you're likely facing a few more weeks of seasonally diminished demand for your product.

Hopefully you've used this downtime to service and maintain equipment, update your website, and generally tidy things up after the 2012

busy season. Now it's time to get ready for 2013 and all of the challenges that presents. And while you wait for the phone to ring with requests for your restrooms and other offerings, thoughts might turn to jobs you dream of snagging one day.

## GETTING TO WORK

You know what I'm talking about: picking up one of those prize portable sanitation plums in your service territory. These are the jobs that can help your company make a significant revenue jump, perhaps even stimulate enough business that you can think about buying that new truck, adding a driver to help out, or purchasing a VIP restroom trailer.

I can imagine you daydreaming right now. You're looking out the window at a snow-draped environment, envisioning a clean, new vehicle pulling into the driveway and beckoning you to run a route in new found comfort and style. Snap out of it. It's time to stop imagining that new truck and think of ways to land a new event that will help make that rig happen for real.

Where do you start? I've compiled a few ideas to jumpstart the sales process. Remember the old adage, "nothing ventured, nothing gained"? As the March blahs keep you from a lot of paying work, it's time to venture. Try these networking ideas for landing a new special event this year:

### Get on the phone and chat it up.

There's nothing like rockin' sales old school, and that means cold calling and asking for five minutes with any event planner you can think of. Spend some time on Google searching event websites in your territory, then compile a list of, say, a dozen prospects and start making phone calls. Prepare yourself psychologically for the inevitable string of rejections you will receive, and celebrate the occasional victory of nailing down a brief in-person visit with a potential customer.

When looking for folks to call, go beyond the obvious contacts. Think about acquaintances and other business owners in your area, then ask them for friend-of-a-friend introductions to potential customers. And when researching events, think outside of your usual territory. You probably wouldn't travel an extra half hour beyond your typical boundaries to serve a one-off construction account. But an event where you might place 30 units for a weekend? That's a different story.

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### Work a few charitable sponsorship deals.

Approach special event organizers as a collaborator or a potential partner, not just another subcontractor on the expense ledger. Most PROs are asked to donate their equipment and services to smaller events now and then. Don't wait to be asked. Go out and offer to donate half the cost of necessary portable sanitation equipment for an event in exchange for sponsorship of an aspect of the event.

You can feel good about contributing to a local special event, sure. But there is real value to being an event sponsorship partner. Many event boards include community leaders who work for or own local companies, and those companies may one day need portable restroom service. And your goodwill gesture may be noticed by an event attendee who needs your services. And, most obviously, your willingness to support the event could lead to a long-term contract for services.

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In a way, social media turns the traditional "rules" of promotion upside down, favoring informal and forward communication over careful cultivation of relationships.

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### Explore the social media connection.

Worm your way into a festival or other event's inner sanctum by schmoozing it up via their Facebook page or by following and responding to a key organizer's Twitter feeds. Maybe you wouldn't dream of sidling up to the president of the local county fair and making small talk when you see him in church on Sunday. But social media platforms can be magical places where informal chitchat is expected and a casual question like, "Hey, do you need any help with the portable restrooms?" would be welcomed as helpful interaction.

In a way, social media turns the traditional "rules" of promotion upside down, favoring informal and forward communication over careful cultivation of relationships. More than ever, it's all about quick shouts and responses, and a "What can we do for each other today?" attitude. Business people are stretched for time, and in that environment, spur-of-the-moment contacts are expected, and swift rejections shouldn't be taken personally. So get out there and start mixing it up and see what happens.

### Tap into tourism.

No matter your location, there's probably a visitors and convention bureau covering the area. Get acquainted with the organization, read its promotional magazines from cover to cover, and mine its calendar of events for any opportunity. Call and make an appointment to speak to a representative of the bureau who can connect you to decision-makers for various festivals, fun runs and art fairs. Remember, these are the people who want your community to shine for visitors. Let them know your super-clean, well-maintained restrooms and professional drivers will reflect well on any event and the whole community.

### MAKE IT HAPPEN

Clearly, going out and landing a lucrative account is one of the biggest and most time-consuming challenges of running a portable sanitation business. But it's also one of the most rewarding tasks before you. And there's no time like the present — before you have to gear up for the busy season — to get moving. ■

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# Are You a People Person?

**IF YOUR COMPANY IS BIG ENOUGH TO HAVE EMPLOYEES, BUT TOO SMALL FOR A HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, CHECK OUT THESE HR IDEAS TO SAVE TIME AND REDUCE STRESS.**

By Judy Kneiszel

**H**uman resources people are frequently the brunt of jokes in the comic strip *Dilbert* and on the TV comedy “The Office,” but if you find yourself having to take care of payroll, benefits, recruiting, hiring, training and legal matters for your employees, you know that human resources is no laughing matter. In fact, it can be a stressful matter. These tasks take a lot of time, especially when they are not your specialty. But what can you do? Hiring a full-time human resources professional is probably not financially feasible, but somebody’s got to take care of the people business.

## GET SCHOOLED

You don’t need a degree in human resources management, but a little formal training wouldn’t hurt. Check with your local technical college, community college or university to see if they offer an introductory course that you or someone in your company could benefit from. There are also online courses in human resources available, as well as numerous lectures on human resources topics available for free on YouTube.

## READ ALL ABOUT IT

If you don’t want to take a formal class, articles covering a broad spectrum of human resources topics are available online. The Small Business Administration ([www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)) is a great place to go for basic information before you hire your first employee. Find information on everything from how to write a job description or an employee handbook to an overview of required and optional employee benefits. The site also explains the difference between a contract worker and an employee.

If legal issues regarding employees are what you need information about, the Department of Labor ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)) provides answers. It’s a great source for keeping up to date on topics like wages, unemployment insurance, health plans and benefits, health and safety laws, and compliance issues.

For a little levity on the subject, check out the Evil HR Lady at [www.evilhrlady.org](http://www.evilhrlady.org). This blog promises to demystify human resources. Content skews a little more corporate than small business, but it’s so chock-full of information, you’re sure to find tidbits of wisdom you can put to good use. You can also submit questions and hope the Evil HR Lady answers them. And if you don’t find the answers you seek on this site, there are links to dozens of related sites.

## TOOLS YOU CAN USE

As with any task, managing human resources is easier if you have the right equipment. Start at [www.gneil.com](http://www.gneil.com) and check out nifty tools to help manage and motivate people. You’ll find everything from Federal Labor Law posters to training games to Employee-of-the-Month programs complete with plaque, ready-to-engrave nameplates and award certificates.

## ELECTRONICS TO THE RESCUE

The right software can also make your human resources tasks easier.

Some products are designed to work with your accounting software, like SimpleHR, which works with QuickBooks. There’s a product especially for offices that are heavy users of Microsoft products called Microsoft Dynamics. Other programs to check out include People-Trak HR, OrangeHRM and EmpXtrack Starter Edition.

Make sure any software you consider is adequate, but not more than you need for a small business. By that I mean some software is very task-specific and only does one thing, like payroll or benefits administration. You probably need a good general personnel tracking software package.

Keep in mind that some HR software is Web-based. This might be advantageous to you if you find yourself squeezing in HR tasks at the end of the day at home, or you are on the road a lot but still need to keep up with HR chores. Be sure to read user reviews of the product, and if you are still confused after browsing software options online, talk with owners of similar businesses to see what they use and how they like it. Your accountant may have an opinion as well.

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Professional employer organizations, or PEOs as they are called, generally charge a fee of anywhere from 2 to 12 percent of total wages paid. But some PEOs might, for small companies with only two to five employees, price their services at a flat monthly fee.

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## OUTSOURCE IT

Paying someone outside of your company to take over all HR functions is an attractive option, but out of reach cost-wise for small businesses with fewer than 12 employees. Professional employer organizations, or PEOs as they are called, generally charge a fee of anywhere from 2 to 12 percent of total wages paid. But some PEOs might, for small companies with only two to five employees, price their services at a flat monthly fee. If getting HR off your desk entirely is a priority, it wouldn’t hurt to look into hiring a PEO.

## THE MORE YOU KNOW

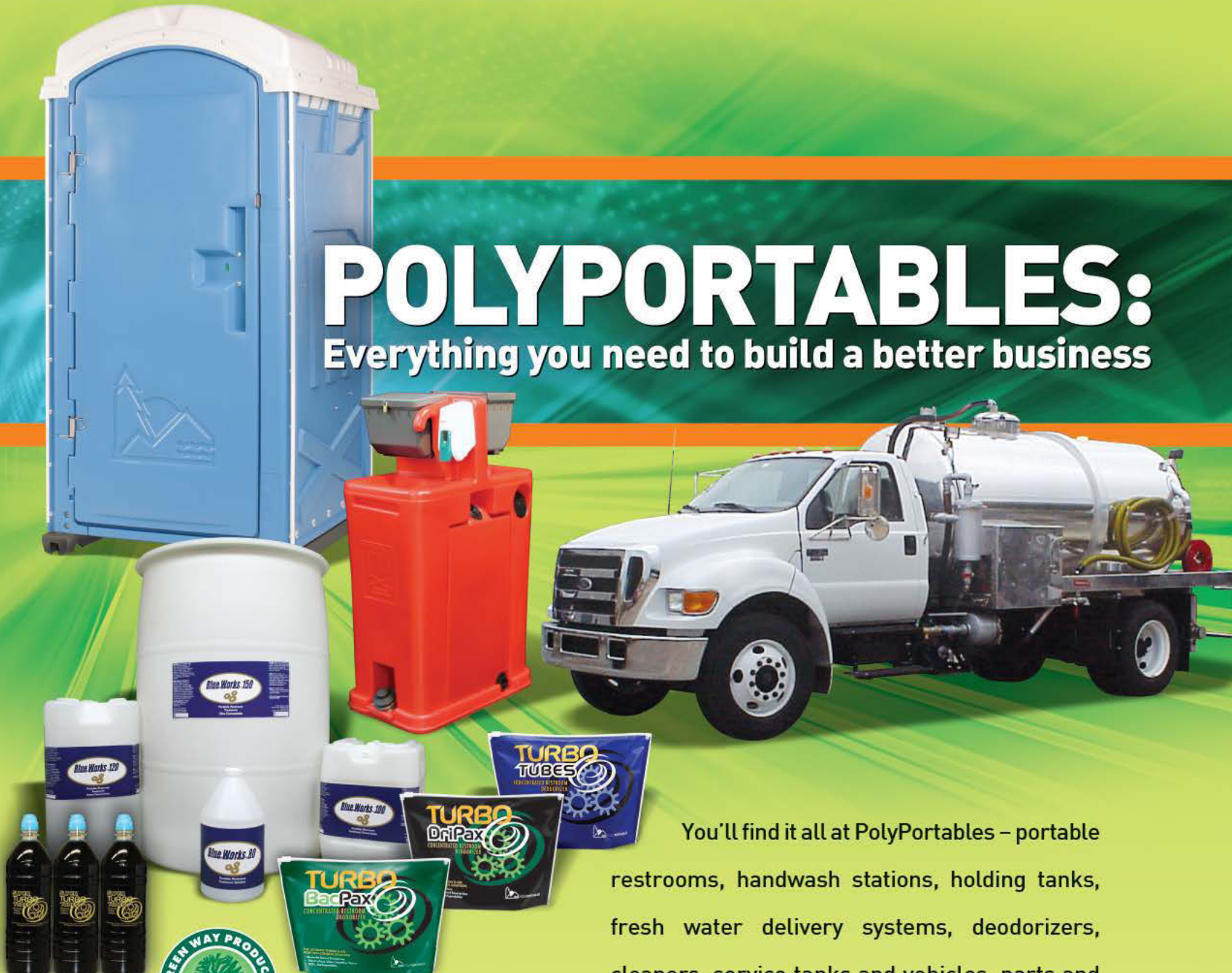
It’s probably rare for a human resources professional to start a portable sanitation business, but it’s quite common for the owner of portable sanitation business to do the work of an HR professional. You can either be frustrated by the time and effort you put into these tasks or realize that your employees are your greatest assets and, as such, they must be taken care of.

Take the time to increase your knowledge and you won’t bear the brunt of jokes or get the reputation of being an “evil” HR person. You’ll have happier employees, a more compliant business and, hopefully, more of the workday to devote to revenue-generating activities. ■



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« Always mindful of safety, technician Duane Hearn carefully wraps up the hose after servicing a restroom at a construction site. (Photos by Grant Blankenship)

# Pathway to Profits

**Procuring government contracts and concentrating on quick-paying customers helped Georgia's A-OK Portables build a strong business foundation**

**BY KEN WYSOCKY**

**T**alk about bad timing: In 2007, Lee and Mark Insley bought a small but established portable sanitation business in Warner Robins, Ga., just as a huge economic downturn was looming on the horizon. Of course there have been challenges along the way, but the business — which they renamed A-OK Portables LLC — is doing fine.

Lee Insley, the company's majority owner, credits two things for the company's unlikely success amid economic duress. The first is a con-

ventional business strategy, based on providing great customer service and assembling and retaining a core group of top-notch employees. The second, however, centers on pursuing government contracts that provide steady business and a customer base that pays bills on time — and subsequently generates consistent cash flow.

"Mark and I weren't looking for this business," Insley says, noting they owned several construction-related firms when they learned that the restroom business, A & K Portable Toilets, was for sale. "It just

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### COMPLEMENT TO CONSTRUCTION

A friend told the couple the portable restroom company would be a logical extension of their construction businesses. When she looked into it, Insley realized the business — which generated about 75 percent of its gross sales from construction rentals and 25 percent from special events — had potential, and could be easily integrated into the couple's existing businesses.

"We had the administration in place to handle another service business. Mark has a mechanical background to handle the trucks and I have the financial background to handle the business side," she says.

But within a year or so, when "the construction world fell upside down," as Insley puts it, the business grew from a side dish to a full-course meal. At first, she concentrated on expanding A-OK's geographic base, finding pockets of business in under-served markets. But eventually, she also realized that government contracts — and other contract-based work — offered great potential.

For example, Warner Robins sits amid a large military market, so A-OK went after contracts to provide portable restrooms to more military bases, which regularly need restrooms to accommodate everything from construction work to training courses. The company also sought contracts to provide restrooms to local utilities, which require them during plant maintenance shutdowns and the like, Insley says.

"When we bought the company, there was one military contract in place," she says. "Now we have numerous military contracts. Why? Because during the worst economic conditions of our lifetime, the phone wasn't ringing (for construction-related rentals). But we noticed who was consistently paying their bills — the military and utilities.

"We decided that these regular-paying customers were the ones we should go after for our main customers," she adds. "From there, it was just a matter of learning how to find (contracts) and start bidding on them."

The strategy worked. By 2009, the company had doubled its first-year gross revenue, and by 2012, had quadrupled that amount, Insley says.

### SHUFFLING PAPER

While the contracts offer great long-term rewards, there's much more work up front to obtain them compared to wooing non-contract customers. In particular, federal contracts require hours of compiling detailed information to certify a company is equipped to handle a job, Insley explains.

The first step is keeping an eye out for government solicitations for contractors, either by hiring companies that monitor requests for solicitations and forward opportunities as they pop up, or regularly monitoring various websites. Insley says she spends an average of 30 minutes daily checking websites where government agencies post solicitations. "We figure if we can do it ourselves ... we should do it instead of paying someone to do it," she says.

Federal-contract solicitations are the hardest to fulfill, while state and local solicitations are less onerous, she says.

"There's definitely a skill to answering those solicitations," she notes. "I understand why some people don't go after them. The information you have to produce about your company is tremendous. The biggest one we ever did was two inches thick and took more than 100 hours to assemble."

### ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Most contracts last three to five years, though it varies from agency to agency. And terms are subject to change; for instance, Insley says A-OK has one contract with a military base to service 30 units on a daily basis, plus provide special-events service. But the base can reduce the amount of restrooms needed at any time.

One unexpected bonus from the contracts: They've provided entry into markets A-OK otherwise might not consider. For example, a contract to provide restrooms to a federal law-enforcement training center in Brunswick opened the door to another customer in the area. And providing service to a military base in Savannah led A-OK to purchase a small restroom business there, Insley says.

"In May 2011, a plumber in Savannah approached us about buying a side restroom business he operated," she notes. "That's turned into

*(continued)*



"When we bought the company, there was one military contract in place. Now we have numerous military contracts. Why? Because during the worst economic conditions of our lifetime ... we noticed who was consistently paying their bills — the military and utilities."

**LEE INSLEY**

<<< Mark and Lee Insley pose in front with the A-OK Portables team, including (from left, back row) Eric Epperson, Jeremy Flowers, Duane Hearn, Richard David and Bill Insley; (front row) Rachel Insley, Michelle Brown, Kylee Ervin and Brittini Hancock.



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Technician Duane Hearn gets the equipment ready to pump a restroom at a construction job site. >>>

a good market for us. But had we not been there, he never would have called us.”

## IN THE GARAGE

As the company grew, so did its stable of equipment. Today, A-OK operates two full-service yards — one in Warner Robins and one in Savannah — and owns 1,500 restrooms, made mostly by Satellite Industries Inc. and PolyPortables Inc., and 16 portable showers and 75 handwash stations, made by both PolyPortables and PolyJohn Enterprises Inc.

The company relies on a wide range of used service trucks, including a 1987 International with a 1,500-gallon freshwater tank, used only for special events; a 2000 International with a 250-gallon wastewater/100-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport, Inc. pump (it also can carry six restrooms); a 2006 International with a 1,000-gallon wastewater/350-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport pump, built out by Abernethy Welding & Repair Inc.; a 1998 Ford F-800 with a 1,000-gallon wastewater/350-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport pump; a 2000 Ford F-550 with a 500-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport pump; a 2004 Ford F-550 with a 500-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump, a brand owned by Westmoor Ltd.; a 2006 Ford LCF with a 750-gallon wastewater/200-gallon freshwater tank and a pump made by



Jurop (Chandler Equipment, Inc.); a 2006 Ford F-750 with a 1,000-gallon wastewater/400-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump; a 2006 Ford F-550 with a 500-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump; a 2008 Ford F-550 with a 600-gallon wastewater/200-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump; a 2000 Isuzu with a 1,000-gallon wastewater/300-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump; a 2001 Isuzu with a 750-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater tank and a Conde pump; and a 2008 Isuzu with a 750-gallon wastewater/300-gallon freshwater tank, built by Crescent Tank Mfg. with a Masport pump (it also can carry eight restrooms). The majority of the trucks have steel tanks, with a few made of stainless steel.

## Employee Retention is Key

Finding and retaining a quality workforce can be a major challenge for small businesses. To keep workers happily on board, A-OK Portables LLC, based in Warner Robins, Ga., offers a variety of benefits, says majority owner Lee Insley.

For starters, employees can buy short-term disability insurance and life insurance. The company pays a portion of the premiums, based on a sliding scale depending on employee longevity. To qualify, employees must be on board full time or part time for one year, Insley says.

The company also offers employees comp days for working on holidays, plus two weeks paid vacation for between two and nine years of service and three weeks after 10 years, plus six paid holidays a year. The company is also considering a 401(k) plan and employee ownership options.

“They take a lot of pride in what they do,” Insley says when asked why the company is considering the two new benefits. “We haven’t built this by ourselves — they did. We couldn’t do what we do without our fantastic employees. You know the saying about a company being only as strong as its weakest link? Amen!”

Employees also enjoy another benefit: in-house Christmas club and savings plans in which money is deducted from checks and kept in a personal account.

“The rule is that the world could be falling apart, but you will not get your Christmas account money until the first week of December,” she says. “The two accounts are silly little things, but (employees) really love them. People are not savers by nature, and this teaches them how to plan and budget. We all need a little structure in our lives.”

“We couldn’t do what we do without our fantastic employees. You know the saying about a company being only as strong as its weakest link? Amen!”

LEE INSLEY

## PEOPLE POWER

Another factor in A-OK’s success is a core group of longtime employees. To find employees with a solid work ethic, Insley targets a specific demographic: farm kids.

“My best employees are farm kids,” says Insley. “They never complain about working in heat or rain, or when a piece of equipment breaks down an hour from the shop in an inconvenient area.

“They tend to be more self-sufficient,” she continues. “It’s how they tick ... they’re not afraid to get their hands dirty. They get that it’s just not good enough to remove graffiti on a restroom to the point where you can’t read the words any more — they know it must be completely removed. It’s all about work ethic.”

To find such employees, Insley runs a local newspaper ad with general labor/farm job as the description. Then she does short telephone interviews with respondents, and says within minutes, she knows what kind of person they are.

“You know immediately because they either go, ‘Eeeew,’ when you describe the actual job, or they ask me to tell them more about it,” she says.

From there, Insley narrows the field to five or six people, then conducts face-to-face interviews. After that, she selects two or three finalists to ride with a veteran A-OK driver for a half day so the prospective employees can “see the good, the bad and the ugly.” This also allows the driver to get a feel for the potential employee, in terms of initiative and trainability.

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Technician Richard Davis prepares to pump an ADA-accessible unit from Satellite Industries. >>>

The potential worker must pass a drug test before receiving basic training. After three or four weeks, the new hire goes out on their own, at first on smaller "baby routes to wean them into it," Insley says.

### BRIGHT FUTURE

Insley feels A-OK is well positioned for further growth, especially if construction activity picks up. To handle growth more efficiently, she plans to start upgrading the company's fleet of older vehicles after the company is debt-free, which should occur in early 2013.

"We want to keep growing, keep the right employees, and get the right equipment in place," she says. "In fact, we recently purchased solid-waste roll-off containers that will further diversify our company."

Business expansion in an uncertain economy? It's not unfamiliar territory for A-OK Portables. ■



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# Write a Buyout Agreement

**OWNERSHIP SITUATIONS CHANGE, SO YOU WANT TO IRON OUT THE TERMS OF A POTENTIAL DEPARTURE FROM THE BUSINESS TO AVOID FINANCIAL CONFLICT DOWN THE ROAD**

Fred S. Steingold

Yes, breaking up is hard to do. But planning ahead can ease the pain. If you're in business with others, chances are the current co-ownership won't last forever. Lots of things can happen. You or a co-owner may:

- Decide to move out of state to pursue a new line of work
- Become physically or mentally disabled - or even die
- Seek to buy out a co-owner's interest in the business
- Want to sell to an outsider

What happens then? Will the transition proceed smoothly and fairly? Or will there be discord and possibly litigation? The answer may depend on how well you've planned for the future.

Certainly, during the sunny, optimistic days when you're putting the business together, it's hard to focus on breaking up. And it's equally difficult

when the business is humming merrily along. But planning ahead can save a ton of grief for all involved.

To avoid anguishing problems, it makes sense for every business with two or more owners to put together a buyout agreement. This is true whether your business is set up as a partnership, a corporation or a limited liability company.

So what exactly is a buyout agreement? It's a binding contract that controls the buying and selling of ownership interests in your business. Importantly, it makes sure that you and your co-owners aren't forced to work with strangers or other people you won't get along with. It also helps make sure that if a co-owner leaves the business, he or she will receive a reasonable cash settlement. Or if a co-owner dies, his or her heirs will be paid fairly.

## RETAINING CONTROL

Two lawyers — Bethany Laurence and Anthony Mancuso — have written a superb book called *Business Buyout Agreements*. In it, they point out the main purpose of a buy-sell agreement is to protect the rights of the remaining business owners when one owner departs, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

"The remaining owners," they write, "are allowed to decide whether an interest can be sold to an outsider or whether an ex-spouse or an heir should be allowed to keep their newly gained ownership interest."

To better understand this point, consider the following scenarios.

Scenario #1: Joe and Cindy form a small corporation. Each receives 50 percent of the corporate stock. They don't foresee problems down the road so they don't bother with a buy-sell agreement. A few years later, Joe and Cindy have a serious disagreement over how to expand the business. To avoid further hassles, Joe sells his shares to Albert, whom Cindy has never met before. The two quickly reach an impasse on management issues and the business comes to a standstill.

Scenario #2: Joe and Cindy form a small corporation — and they wisely create a buyout agreement to deal with what happens if one of them wants to leave the business. A few years later when they disagree on how to expand, Joe decides to sell his shares. Albert offers to buy the shares for \$10 each. The agreement requires Joe to offer the shares to Cindy at the same price. Rather than share control of the business with a stranger, Cindy buys Joe's shares. The business continues to run smoothly and prosper.

## A GUARANTEED BUYER

Laurence and Mancuso also elaborate on another way a buyout agreement can help you:

"If you're moving out of state and want to sell your ownership interest, an agreement can compel the other owners to buy it from you — in effect

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providing a market for that ownership interest where one might not naturally exist.

“If you and your co-owners don’t make that kind of agreement, there’s no guarantee that you could ever get cash for your interest.”

And a buyout agreement can also guarantee that your spouse and children are fairly compensated for your business interest if you die. Again, let’s consider two scenarios:

Scenario #1: Norm, Betty and Phil form a small corporation, each receiving one-third of the shares. They neglect to sign a buy-sell agreement. Three years later, Norm dies unexpectedly. His wife and two children inherit his shares. They want to sell the shares to raise money for college and other living expenses but there’s no real market out there. Betty and Phil buy the shares for a pittance.

Scenario #2: Norm, Betty and Phil set up their corporation and plan for the future by signing a buyout agreement. When Norm dies unexpectedly, the corporation is required to buy his shares from his wife and children. Under the formula set up in the buyout agreement, the corporation pays a total of \$250,000 in five annual installments of \$50,000 each. Norm’s family is able live more comfortably.

As you can see, not only can a buyout agreement guarantee a buyer for a departing owner’s interest; it can also provide a price (or a price formula) and a time schedule for payment. Sometimes the buyout of a deceased owner is funded by life insurance that the business pays for.

---

**YOU WANT TO CREATE YOUR BUYOUT AGREEMENT BEFORE IT’S NEEDED — ESPECIALLY BEFORE YOU KNOW WHO WILL BE MOST AFFECTED BY IT. THAT HELPS ENSURE THE AGREEMENT WILL BE FAIR AND REASONABLE.**

---

## **TIMING IS CRITICAL**

You want to create your buyout agreement before it’s needed — especially before you know who will be most affected by it. That helps ensure the agreement will be fair and reasonable. Ideally, you’d like to get the job done when you form your business, but it can be done later.

If you have a partnership, you can put the buyout terms into your written partnership agreement. If you have a corporation, you can put the language in a pre-incorporation agreement or shareholder’s agreement — or a separate buyout document. With a limited liability company, the logical place is the operating agreement.

The Laurence-Mancuso book is a great starting point for putting together a buyout agreement since it contains sample forms and digital templates. Before the agreement gets signed, however, it’s smart to have a lawyer look it over. ■



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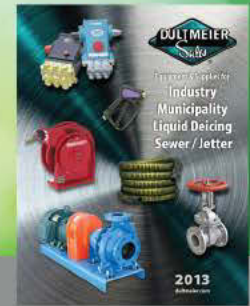


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Runners and spectators at the Helvetia Half Marathon and Widmer Brothers 10K race use restrooms placed by the Clinkscals crew. (Photos by Christopher Lee Evacko)

## ON LOCATION

**THE JOB:** Helvetia Half Marathon and Widmer Brothers 10K

**LOCATION:** Hillsboro, Ore.

**THE PRO:** Clinkscals Portable Toilets & Septic Service



# The AMAZING RACE

The gang at Clinkscals Portable Toilets goes the distance to quickly set up and tear down restrooms along a popular half-marathon route

BY BETTY DAGEFORDE

### THE TEAM

Clinkscals Portable Toilets & Septic Service is owned and operated by the brother-sister team of Trent Clinkscals and Terry Shankle in Molalla, Ore., a small town about halfway between Portland and Salem. Terry takes care of the office and Trent works with a field staff of four full-timers and a couple of part-timers.

All hands were on deck for the Helvetia Half Marathon, plus a few extra family members. "It's a little bit overkill, but the reason we have so many people for 70 toilets is we have to set it up the morning of the race and then pick up as soon as the race is over," Trent Clinkscals explains.

### COMPANY HISTORY

The company had its origins in a septic business, Gary F. Clinkscals Septic Pump Service, started in 1981 by the siblings' parents, Gary and

Marie Clinkscals. In 1992, Trent and Terry bought the company and quickly decided to expand the operation by adding portable restrooms. "Dad had thought about it. And then I thought, as an expansion area, what better place to do it?" Clinkscals says. "We bought three brand-new toilets. We bought a used truck from one of our competitors and away we went." Working off the good reputation their parents had established, the venture was successful, and before the year was out, they had 80 units in their inventory. Today it's up to 500 and accounts for 75 percent of their business.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

The company got its foot in the door with this event 13 years ago when the service provider for a Mt. Hood snowshoe race didn't show up. A friend of the promoter made a few random calls and luckily stumbled onto the Clinkscals, who responded promptly to her cry for help. The caller was Paula Harkin, who later went on to create the Helvetia Half Marathon. "She

*(continued)*

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was impressed with our response and quality of service so when she started doing things on her own, she called us," Clinkscapes says. That was 12 years ago and they've had the contract ever since. It's their biggest event of the year.

### THE MAIN EVENT

At 8 a.m. on June 9, 2012, just outside Gordon Faber Stadium in Hillsboro, Ore., 4,000 runners took off and headed for the hills in the 12th annual Helvetia Half Marathon and Widmer Brothers 10K. The course took them through the pasturelands of northwestern Oregon, past the hamlet of Helvetia and its historic landmark Helvetia Tavern, and back to Hillsboro for a dramatic finish in the center of the stadium floor amid a cheering crowd. Besides T-shirts and awards, participants were treated to the Tavern's renowned Helvetia Burgers (meat or veggie), the Widmer Brothers Brewery beer garden, and musical entertainment by the Cow Paddy Stompers.

### BY THE NUMBERS

The company provided 72 units for the event — 34 near the starting line outside the stadium, nine about a mile later at the first water station (which was also the last water station on the return trip), five at the next station, four at the one after that, and three each at the next four. Eight additional

units were supplied at a pavilion behind the stadium to supplement on-site facilities for post-race festivities. These silver Satellite Industries Tufways and PolyJohn Enterprises PJN3s were equipped with hand sanitizers.

### LET'S ROLL

It was a middle-of-the-night start for the company as all units had to be in place by 6:30 a.m. At 4 a.m., the team left Molalla for the hour-long drive to Hillsboro. To carry everything in one load, they used three pickup trucks (a 1999 Ford F-250, a 2006 Chevy 2500, and a 2012 Chevy 3500), two vacuum trucks and five locally built custom trailers that carried between 10 and 16 units each. After everything was set up, the team had a little time to enjoy a breakfast break before the race started, but as soon as the last runner left the starting line, they were back at work pumping and removing units. They stayed in contact with the police to determine the location of the last runner on the route, and followed a respectable distance behind. By 1:30 p.m., they were ready to pick up the last eight units at the stadium and call it a day.

### KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

Units were prepped with Walex Products Co. deodorizer and fragrance and a half bucket of water. After the race, a tag team approach was used, with the pumping team handing off to the hauling crew. Units were later



"The crew gets antsy if they don't know what's going on ahead of time. They like to get everything loaded up way before Friday, so everything's ready to go and they know what the game plan is."

TRENT CLINKSCALES

<<< The Clinkscapes Portables team serving the half-marathon includes (left to right) Tessa Shankle, Terry Shankle, Trent Clinkscapes, Daniel Luna, Cory Hailey, Nick Clifford and Stephanie San Marco.



AAA Workers Cory Hailey (left) and Stephanie San Marco (on the truck) retrieve restrooms along the race course.

pressure-washed at the company's yard. The two service vehicles were a 2004 International 4300 with a 500-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater steel tank built out by Keith Huber, Inc. and a 2006 International 4300 with a 600-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank built out by JENFAB Inc. Both have Masport, Inc. pumps. Waste was transferred to a larger truck at the yard and taken to the City of Salem's treatment plant.

### TEAMWORK AND GROUNDWORK

Other than missing out on the legendary hamburgers and getting briefly showered on by the stadium sprinkler system as they were setting up, Clinkscales says everything went smoothly. They were spared one of their usual headaches. "Normally we find a bunch of clothes in the tank — unmentionables — but this year not as much," Clinkscales says.

One headache they never have to deal with for this event is an inadequate number of units because the promoter does not skimp. "Paula does not want to have people waiting to use the bathroom," Clinkscales says. The two parties always touch base after the event. "I make a point to email her and ask if there's anything we need to put in the file for next year," he says. They've already received the "see you next year" email from her.

Clinkscales says organization and communication are the keys to success for the event. "It all comes down to a lot of planning ahead of time, and taking really good notes. We keep files on each event and what truck went with what trailer with what toilets on it, which stops they went to. The crew gets antsy if they don't know what's going on ahead of time. They like to get everything loaded up way before Friday, so everything's ready to go and they know what the game plan is." ■

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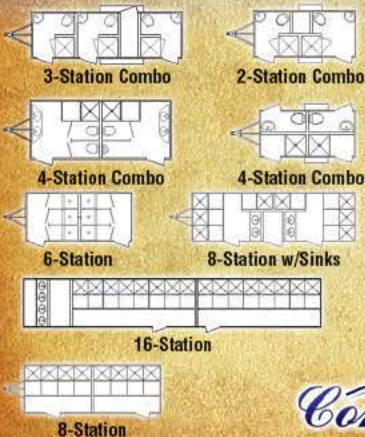
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## Trucks and Tanks

By Craig Mandli

### PORTABLE RESTROOM VACUUM TRUCK

The 2012 International 58,000-pound **GVW** portable restroom vacuum truck from **Best Enterprises** features a 3,600-gallon stainless steel tank, overflow sensor control, spring-mounted rear legs to relieve stress, a backup camera with LCD display, a Masport 400 WV pump, three stainless steel toolboxes, a remote-controlled 3000 psi jetter, an electric hose reel with 275-foot hose, and a nozzle kit. The truck has an angle drive system with dual PTO and warning light in-cab for PTO, and a backup switch on the dash for the jetter. The water compartment features a heater coil and jetter for easy clean out. **800/288-2378; www.bestenterprises.net.**



### VACUUM PUMP PACKAGE

**Chander Equipment Inc.** and **Jurop** developed a dual fan-cooled **RV-Series** vacuum pump and package specially designed for industrial and energy sectors. The packages are available in multiple drive configurations, which include either gearbox, hydraulic or belt drive. The series operates at or near a quiet 73 dBA while producing 18 inches Hg. **800/342-0887; www.chandlerequipment.com.**



### ELIMINATOR VACUUM PUMP

The **Eliminator MK250** vacuum pump package from **Fruitland Manufacturing** is designed for portable sanitation service, and includes a Fruitland RCF250 commercial and continuous-duty vacuum pump, creating optimal vacuum for portable sanitation (180 cfm). The package is engineered with a heavy-duty and integral secondary shut-off, oil-catch muffler, drive coupling, vacuum/pressure gauge, and all relief and drain valves. Hydraulic or gearbox drive adapters make vacuum system hookup easy, durable and professional. The package has a compact design, measuring just 26 inches wide by 23 inches high for convenient installation on portable sanitation service trucks. The pump offers low oil



consumption, including an automated oiling system with steel lines, pump oil level sight gauge, vane gauging ports, anti-shock design, three primary cooling phases, and a two-year parts and service warranty. **800/663-9003; www.fruitland-mfg.com.**

### PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVICE UNITS

The **PTM** portable restroom service truck from **Imperial Industries Inc.** can be built with steel tank capacities of 980 to 2,150 gallons mounted on a choice of a Ford F550 or a Dodge 5500 Series chassis. Imperial can customize the truck with a variety of features. Aluminum units are also available. **800/558-2945; www.imperialind.com.**



### PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVICE VEHICLE

The portable restroom service vehicle from **Ledwell** features a PTO-driven remote four-way valve, carbon steel or stainless body, and a large water-resistant storage capacity. The truck's convenience features include rear work lights, a dual toilet carrier with self supporting bed, LED side and rear marker lights, variable freshwater systems, a trailer hitch receiver, high-performance vacuum pump capability, a 2-inch suction hose with ball valve, spring-loaded hose reel with auto rewind, and variable compartment sizes. **888/533-9355; www.ledwell.com.**



### PORTABLE SANITATION VACUUM TANK

Portable sanitation vacuum tanks offered by **Mid-State Tank** include a 1,500-gallon, two-compartment stainless steel tank with 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater compartments installed on a Ford F-750 chassis. The unit has a 20-inch top manway with primary, hose supports, storage cabinets, a work station on both sides, restroom carrier, work lights, sight glasses for the waste compartment, and a sight gauge for the water compartment. Aluminum tanks are available. **800/722-8384; www.midstatetank.com.**



# Case Study: Trucks and Tanks

## PENNSYLVANIA PRO NEEDS RESTROOM SERVICE TRUCK FOR COLD CLIMATE

### PROBLEM

PRO R.C. Stahlnecker, Milton, Pa., needed a new vacuum truck for portable restroom service. His former vacuum tank had compartments for freshwater and wastewater. Located in a cold climate, Stahlnecker wanted to reload restrooms with salt water in winter months, and batch-mix the solution to charge the units rather than adding salt to the water on site.

### SOLUTION

Because the new chassis was tight on space due to new emission standards, adding a separate plastic tank to the unit wasn't an option. So **Pik Rite** engineered a 1,250-gallon steel vacuum tank with three compartments.



In addition, the unit was equipped with dual-side service wands, a low-to-the-ground heavy-duty restroom rack, a driver's side workstation, a 20 gpm wash-down freshwater system, and six work lights for night and low-light work.

### RESULT

Stahlnecker found hauling the premixed solution was more efficient, and technicians serviced more units in a typical workday. **800/236-9763; www.pikrite.com.** ■



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Real Estate Training Systems, Brian Murphy at (817) 861-9998 or rets@rets-llc.com

**August 28-29, 2013 - (TBA), Arizona**  
Univ. Of AZ, Janine Lane at (928) 782-5882 or janinel@cals.arizona.edu

**Vacuum Truck Technician:**

**March 6, 2013 - Ruidoso, NM**  
N-MOWA - NAWT, Jace Ensor at 575-937-8304 or nmowa.president@gmail.com

**Operation and Maintenance Training Certification:**

**March 1-2, 2013 - Helena, MT**  
Lewis and Clark County & NAWT  
Beth Norberg at (406) 447-8385 or bnorberg@co.lewis-clark.mt.us

**Other CEU's for Recertification:**

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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.*



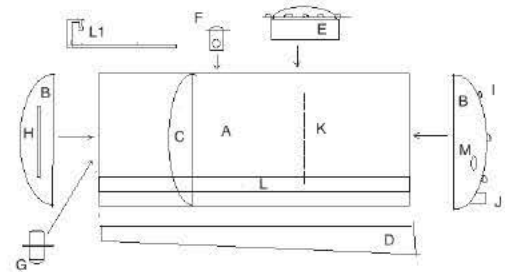
# The Sum of its Parts

**A THOUGHTFUL VACUUM TANK DESIGN WILL INCORPORATE MANY COMPONENTS FOR EFFICIENCY, SAFETY AND A LONG LIFE CYCLE**

By Bob Carlson

Over the past few years, I've had many requests to design the perfect vacuum tank. And for the most part, I generally have responded by saying that the perfect tank is the one that suits you. There is not one optimal, universal vacuum tank design to fit the work of all portable restroom operators.

But let's say I want a basic, easy-to-manage vacuum tank. I've come up with a fundamental design and explanation for a vacuum tank that I think would suit most portable restroom contractors. For this example, we'll be using normal A-36 steel. Stainless steel and aluminum would be slightly different in thicknesses and bracing. Take a look at the listing below and the corresponding letters on the accompanying drawing.



- A. 1/4-inch plate steel shell (round cylinder). For a tank with a smaller-than-typical diameter, there is the possibility of going to 3/16-inch plate.
- B. Flanged and dished heads, made from 1/4-inch plate
- C. Flanged and dished head to act as a bulkhead, separating the water compartment from the waste compartment
- D. Sloped skids, front-to-back, for easier unloading
- E. 20-inch manway located over the baffle (letter K) so a technician can reach both sides of the vacuum tank for cleaning
- F. Primary shut-off located near the front of the vacuum compartment
- G. Secondary moisture trap located on the tank to provide reachable access by the driver for everyday clean out. A user shouldn't need a ladder or have to crawl up on the trays to empty the secondary.
- H. Sight tube on water compartment
- I. Three sight bubbles on rear head to easily monitor the waste level in the tank
- J. Located in the bottom of the rear, the dump can be any size that will allow the tank to be emptied most efficiently. This fitting can also be used for suction (letter M).
- K. Baffle, usually made of the same thickness of material used to construct the tank

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- L. Full-length hose trays, usually made of a lighter material, but reinforced with proper bending to add strength
- LI. The end view of a hose tray shows construction for stiffness. For additional strength and rigidity, they are support-welded from the tank underneath the tray.
- M. Suction fitting. I like a 3-inch because it can easily be reduced to 2 inches and the larger fitting gives more flexibility on the job.

**IN CONCLUSION**

My goal in this type of tank is simple: Make it easy for the operator to maintain both from an operational viewpoint as well as a safety viewpoint. Next month, we'll take a look at the vacuum pumping system.

**Using Both Flat and Dished Heads on a Vacuum Tank**

**QUESTION:** Some portable restroom trucks have a flat head at one end and a dish-type head on the other end. Why doesn't that tank collapse under vacuum?

**Bill Musgraves, Memphis, Tenn.**

**ANSWER:** The water compartment of a portable restroom service truck is not under vacuum. Since the water compartment has its own pump system, the ends can be flat. However, when the waste tank vacuum system is in use, the forces of vacuum need to be dealt with, and that's where the design of the dished heads comes in. When both a water tank and waste tank are incorporated into the same unit, the flat head on one end is most likely part of the water tank, and used to save money and space. It might be cheaper to have a flat head on one side of the water tank, and a structurally superior dished head separating the water and waste compartments. Some PROs, however, don't like the look of a dished head at one end and a flat head on the other.

---

When both a water tank and waste tank are incorporated into the same unit, the flat head on one end is most likely part of the water tank, and used to save money and space.

---

The flat head might be a bit less expensive to manufacture. It requires the labor to cut the circle out and then flange the outside edge of the circle to where it bends 90 degrees. This is done on a head flanger. When you compare the cost of a dished head versus the labor and material of a flat head, the two come pretty close.

Although it might be slightly cheaper to make flat heads in-house, many tank manufacturers find it saves time to purchase the finished flanged and dished heads. While waiting for delivery, the tank builder preps other components on the truck, such as installing the PTO and/or the pump. Ultimately, the flat head gives the customer more space on the truck frame for additional water or wastewater capacity or allows them to shorten the tank to fit the truck's frame if necessary. ■

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### PolyPortables partners with Jordan-Blanchard Capital

PolyPortables has partnered with Jordan-Blanchard Capital (JBC) in a transaction that will ultimately lead to full ownership by JBC. Kathy Crafton, former chief executive officer of the portable restroom manufacturer and daughter of PolyPortables founders Ed and Mitzi Crafton, will serve on the board of directors, providing oversight and guidance during the transition. Jeff Thomas, a principal with JBC, will serve as interim chief executive officer and be responsible for operational management of the company.

### Hino approved for California hybrid incentive

The 2013MY Class 5 195h diesel electric cabover from Hino Trucks is approved by the California Air Resources Board and is eligible for the California Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project. The program attempts to accelerate the deployment of hybrid and zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and vehicle technologies.

### Masport moves offices, manufacturing facility

Masport moved its offices and manufacturing operation to 6801 Cornhusker Highway, Lincoln, Neb. The larger location enables the company to improve technology and customer service. Phone and fax numbers are unchanged.

### Lock America names VP, sales manager; CEO steps back

Lock America International named Watson Visuwan vice president of marketing and Dan Walsh sales manager. CEO Frank Minnella will step back from daily involvement in company operations to take on an advisory role.

### Webasto, ESW form emissions partnership

Webasto Product North America, designer of engine idle reduction technologies, and ESW Group, provider of emissions control products, formed a partnership that will enable fleets and municipalities to obtain Diesel Emission Reduction Act funding for emission control and idle reduction equipment. Webasto manufactures fuel-operated heaters that eliminate the need to idle for engine pre-heat and cab comfort. ESW's diesel particulate filter removes particulate matter from diesel engine exhaust. ■

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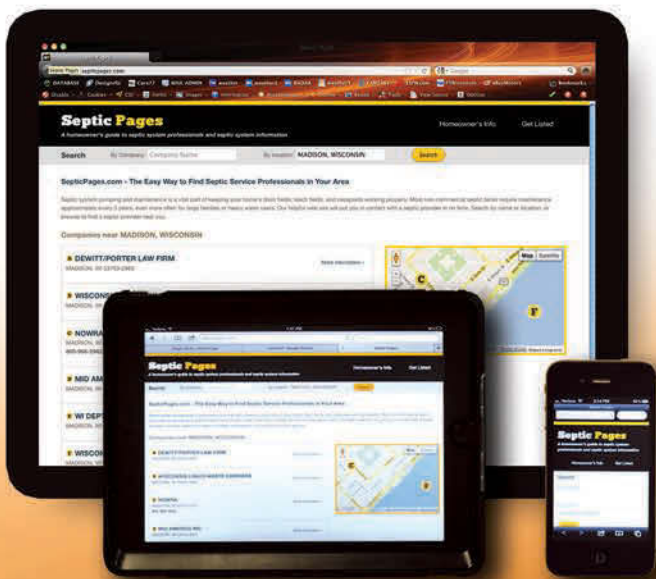




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Business for sale: \$1,200,000. Vacuum truck and portable toilet business in northern Ontario, Canada. Established, turn key operation, large customer base, three vacuum trucks, two toilet trucks, 100 plus toilets, wash stations, trailers and five dump sites. Owner retiring, but can help with transition. Property optional. 705-356-3444. (P04)

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1998 Chevrolet 7500: 3116 CAT engine, 228,000 miles, A/C, very dependable, 2,000-gallon, Jurup pump. Simply needed a larger truck. \$18,000. 812-897-4381, IN. (P04)



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