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A Different Path

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Published monthly by



COLE Publishing Inc.
1720 Maple Lake Dam Rd. • PO Box 220
Three Lakes, WI 54562

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In U.S. or Canada call toll-free 800-257-7222

Elsewhere call 715-546-3346 • Fax: 715-546-3786

Website: www.promonthly.com • Email: pro@promonthly.com

Office hours 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Central Time, Monday - Friday

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: A one-year (12 issue) subscription to *PRO™* in the United States or Canada is free to qualified subscribers. A qualified subscriber is any individual or company in the United States or Canada that partakes in the portable restroom industry. Non-qualified subscriptions are available at a cost of \$60 per year in the United States and \$120 per year outside of the United States. To subscribe please visit promonthly.com or send company name, mailing address, phone number and check or money order (U.S. funds payable to COLE Publishing Inc.) to the address above. MasterCard, VISA and Discover are also accepted. Supply credit card information with your subscription order.

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CIRCULATION: 2012 circulation averaged 9,623 copies per month. This figure includes both U.S. and International distribution.

REPRINTS AND BACK ISSUES: Visit www.promonthly.com/reprints/order for options and pricing. To order reprints, call Jeff Lane at 800-257-7222 (715-546-3346) or email jeffl@colepublishing.com. To order back issues, call Nicole at 800-257-7222 (715-546-3346) or email nicolel@colepublishing.com.



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- Ken Wysocky

ON THE COVER: Dan Grenier, left, and Wayne Fazzari, co-owners of Porta-Plus Portables in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, stand in front of their inventory of PolyJohn restrooms. The pair built the business on construction clientele and snow-plowing in the winter. (Photo by Chris Seto)

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Don't Be a Drill Sergeant

RATHER THAN BARKING OUT ORDERS, THE EXPERT SAYS BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS SHOULD ENCOURAGE WORKERS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND SUGGEST WAYS TO IMPROVE SERVICE

By Jim Kneiszel

We're in the heat of August, the most challenging time of the year for portable restroom operators. Most of you still have a month or more of long construction routes during the week and a hectic special event and party schedule on the weekends.

Last Thursday your drivers were in the middle of a 12-hour shift when three orders for the weekend came through, meaning one of your crew was going to pull double duty making deliveries all over the county. Meanwhile, the trucks have been run hard all summer long and the AC went out on one of your busiest rigs. And it's going to be 92 degrees tomorrow.

You have to take on the work when the phone rings, so your employees are going to have to suck it up and get things done. It's at times like these that nerves become frayed, and sometimes things get said that you – as the salesman, supervisor and manager – might regret later.

FEAR KILLS INITIATIVE

You mean well when you rally the troops and hand out marching orders to get everything done. And even if you aren't raising your voice or being critical, there are subtle ways you may be striking fear in your employees. So says Christine Comaford, a consultant who helps companies with human resources communication.

“All leaders want to outperform, outsell, and out-innovate the competition. And most of us have teams that are quite capable of doing so. We just need to stop scaring the competence out of them.”

Christine Comaford

A few weeks ago, a publicity pitch came across my desk for Comaford's new book, *Smart Tribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together* (Portfolio/Penguin). You'd probably be surprised how many books are published every year aimed at helping business owners and managers like you improve communication skills ... or marketing, efficiency, branding, self-reflection or even office feng shui. I receive press releases on these books almost daily; some of them have good advice to offer, while others present a convoluted message that I, frankly, can't comprehend.

However, some of the ideas taken from Comaford's book struck a chord with me, especially when I think about PROs working through the most challenging days of summer. When you're up to your eyeballs in work, it's probably worthwhile to take a 10-minute break and reflect on how you're communicating with employees. Comaford lobbies for softening your leadership style, trying to find positive ways to get your team to work together during difficult times and meet workplace changes with acceptance.

Here are three of her tips for effective communication:

LET EMPLOYEES FIGURE OUT HOW TO MEET A CHALLENGE

Rather than always telling workers how they should fix a problem, encourage them to find their own solutions. Comaford says this will transform your employees from order takers into innovators, and help your company grow. She says engaging them in problem solving gives employees a sense of safety, belonging and mattering.

“Start inquiring and see what happens. After you do this a few times with someone, she'll start expecting you to ask questions instead of give orders,” Comaford explains. “She'll start coming to you with ideas, seeking feedback and validation. And after a few of these sessions, she'll come to you saying, ‘I have a plan, here it is, and speak now if you aren't OK with it.’ Finally, she'll stop coming to you altogether.”

ESTABLISH A RAPPORT WITH EMPLOYEES BEFORE GIVING HEAVY FEEDBACK

When you're always barking orders, employees will see you as the enemy and retreat into a self-preservation mode. Their priority will be reacting to your authority in ways that help them keep their jobs, not grow in their positions and become valued team players. To reduce the threat they feel, ask “Would it be helpful if?” questions about changes you want to see rather than making clipped pronouncements. Tell them, “I need your help,” when you want them to take on more responsibility.

MAKE EMPLOYEES FEEL GOOD ABOUT CHANGE

If you've been a boss for any period or time, you understand that it's human nature to resist change. If you start a meeting by saying, “There are going to be a lot of changes around here,” get ready for questioning, doubts and withdrawal. Comaford suggests replacing the word change with growth, and explaining that new initiatives are simply improvements over the way you've done things in the past.

“By the way, resistance isn't necessarily a bad thing,” she says. “It's just the first step on the organizational path. But once you can clear the resistance hurdle – and it will go fairly quickly – you're well on your way.”

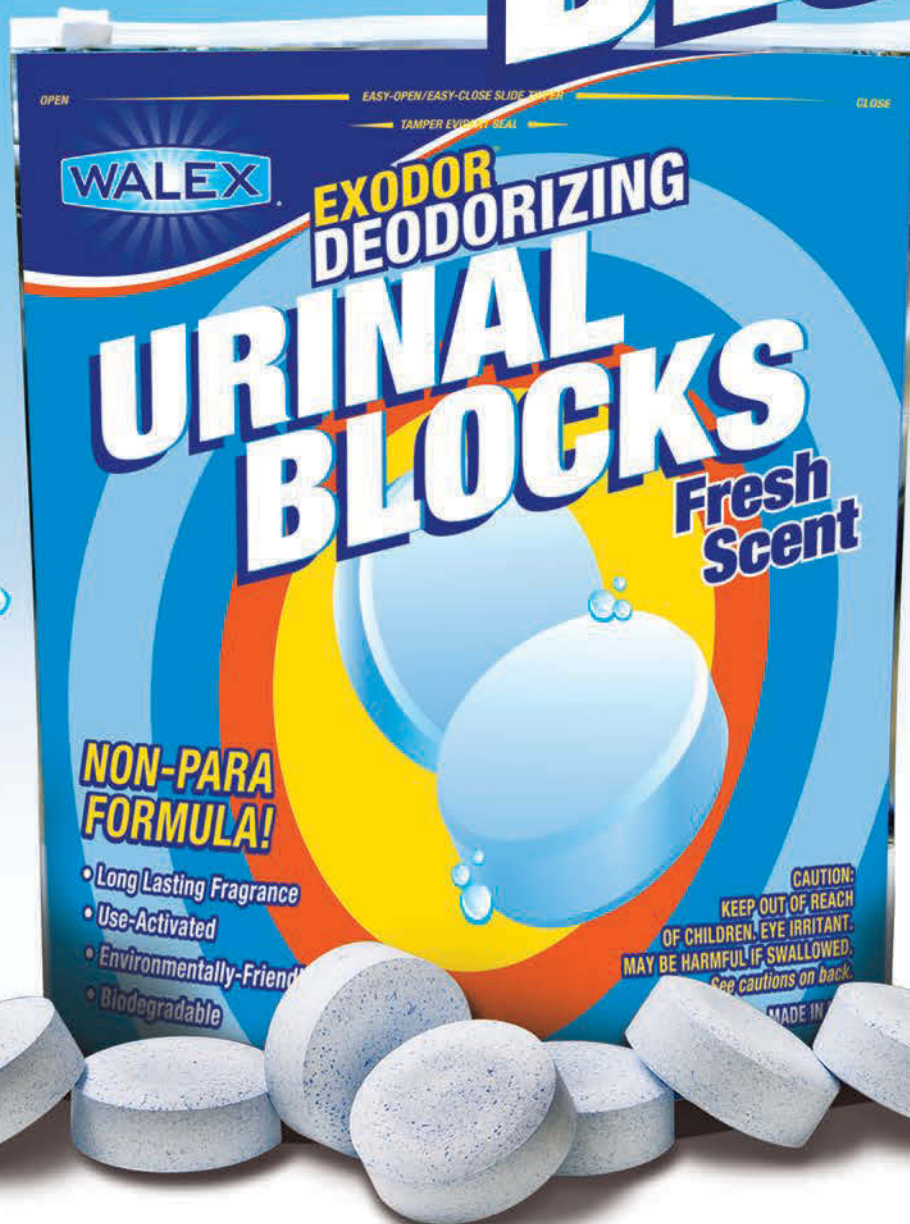
BACK ON THE ROUTE

The busy weeks ahead can make or break your revenue projections for the year. This is your equivalent of the week before Christmas for retail stores. If you find non-threatening and creative ways to motivate the crew, they'll tackle the heavy workload with teamwork and solve day-to-day challenges before you even know about them. Comaford says it's a reachable goal.

“All leaders want to outperform, outsell, and out-innovate the competition,” Comaford says. “And most of us have teams that are quite capable of doing so. We just need to stop scaring the competence out of them.” ■

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Editor's CHOICE

August 2013

Be sure to check out the exclusive online content at PROmonthly.com

By Jim Kneiszel

It's the dog days of summer for portable restroom operators. But you still find time to page through your issue of *PRO* magazine to learn about the latest developments and products in your industry. Well, now we have a bonus for you - additional online-only content that can be accessed instantly from your computer, tablet or smartphone. Find more of the latest portable sanitation industry news - from product releases to videos and podcasts to my editor's blog - at www.promonthly.com. Here's just a sampling of the latest content you can find online:

THE SMART WAY TO LESSEN THE STING OF FUEL INCREASES

The phrase "pain at the pump" has become almost a mantra for everyone in the 21st century, with gasoline and diesel prices seemingly jumping every week. And while many individual and combined factors impact gas prices, what really matters to contractors (whether they have a fleet of two or 22) is how to deal with rising costs. Absorbing additional costs can be perilous, but passing along costs to customers can be risky. Experts agree, however, that there are effective methods to keep fuel costs in check.


HOW TO INCREASE SALES THROUGH UPSELLING YOUR PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS

If you've ever placed an order for a hamburger at a fast-food restaurant, you were likely asked, "Would you like fries with that?" Suggestive selling is a sales technique that works to increase revenue, profit and customer loyalty. Many business owners worry that customers don't like to be bothered with recommended add-ons to their original purchase. Suggestive selling doesn't mean being pushy in order to sell unwanted goods or services. Suggestive selling is often referred to as upselling because, generally, the most difficult part of the sale (getting the buyer to make a purchase) is already done. The upsell is the additional part of the sale.

YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE: WHAT IS YOUR CUSTOMER LOOKING FOR?

Your website is the cornerstone for marketing your business. It's a valuable added tool and it's actually an internal, external and interactive tool, if set up correctly. We're all in a service industry so customer service needs to be a priority. Your website pages need to be set up properly to reflect your services. Work with a professional on this, unless you're skilled in this area. How will you know if you're set up properly? Well, one simple test: If I Google portable restroom operators in your area, do you pop up on the first page?

Check these out at www.promonthly.com/ec/2013/august



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Prospecting in the Era of the Customer

LOOKING FOR NEW PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS IS DIFFERENT NOW THAT BUYERS ARE IN CHARGE

By Judy Kneiszel

The first *Back at the Office* column I wrote many years ago was about prospecting for new business. I recently reread that column and realized a few things have changed over the past decade.

Prospecting means actively looking for new customers and, as I wrote then, “is a necessary part of doing business if you’re going to generate enough customer activity to meet and exceed your revenue goals.”

Prospecting, I went on to write, “... isn’t something you should be doing every now and then, or when you happen to think of it, or when an opportunity presents itself, but all the time.”

All of that is still true, but advances in technology and a changed business climate have altered how salespeople prospect. Sellers ruled the business world for centuries. The salesperson controlled when and how contact was made with a potential customer and what information was presented. Now, to a larger extent than ever, the customer is driving the bus.

THE COLD-CALLING CHALLENGE

One thing giving customers more control is the simple fact that just about everyone on the planet has caller ID, so an absolutely “cold” call is almost impossible. If your number comes up as “private” or “blocked” on caller ID, it may appear suspicious and be rejected immediately. A local number or business name on caller ID may encourage someone to answer, but even then the window of opportunity is narrow.

The business world is more competitive than ever. People are expected to do more in fewer hours and may, as a result, be overly protective of their time. Decision makers don’t want to be interrupted out of the blue by someone they have absolutely no connection with. So if you are going to call someone cold, you better be able to make that connection in the first few seconds.

MAKE A CONNECTION

Learn all you can about a prospect before you make contact. Study a prospect’s website. Try to identify decision makers and analyze a company’s needs from the information available.

Utilizing the professional networking site LinkedIn may help you make connections. Check to see if any names from your prospect’s website are part of your network or the network of someone you are connected to.

Once you’ve done your homework, try making contact with the prospect. You will sound confident if you are armed with information, and people respond positively to confidence. Opening with a topic that engages the prospect in small talk is likely to increase the time they’ll spend communicating with you. In your pitch, briefly explain how you learned of their organization, what you know about it, and how you believe you can serve them. Make it all about the customer.

Sellers ruled the business world for centuries.

The salesperson controlled when and how contact was made with a potential customer and what information was presented. Now, to a larger extent than ever, the customer is driving the bus.

As always, effective cold calling depends a lot on timing. If the person you’ve called is clearly distracted or busy with something else, offer to get back to them at a more convenient time or ask if you can email them some information.

And there’s no point in exaggerating or outright lying to a potential customer. Years ago, prospective clients had a harder time learning more about a company than what they were told in a sales pitch being thrown their way. Today with a few clicks of a mouse or taps on a screen, potential customers can learn a tremendous amount of information and draw their own conclusions.

In addition to your company’s own website which puts a positive spin on your business, potential customers may be able to read reviews – both positive and negative – of your service and see “likes” and posts on social networking sites like Facebook. And they can do the same for your competitors.

WHEN POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS CALL YOU

Everybody turns to the Internet for solutions to problems today, so you’ve got to make sure your company is there with the answers. It’s a more passive way of prospecting than cold calling from the phone book (what’s that?) or mindlessly handing out glossy flyers.

For this passive prospecting to work, you’ve got to be sure when someone types in “portable toilet, Mycity USA,” your company pops up all over the place: website, blog, articles, reviews. By the time a potential customer picks up the phone to call you and inquire about your services, he or she probably knows quite a bit about your company and has, in all likelihood, ruled out a few of your competitors.

NO MORE PAPER TRAIL

Probably the most dated advice in that old column followed the sentence, “Prospecting is easier and more productive if you keep it organized.” I suggested having a notebook or printing forms to file in a binder to write down all pertinent information related to your prospecting.

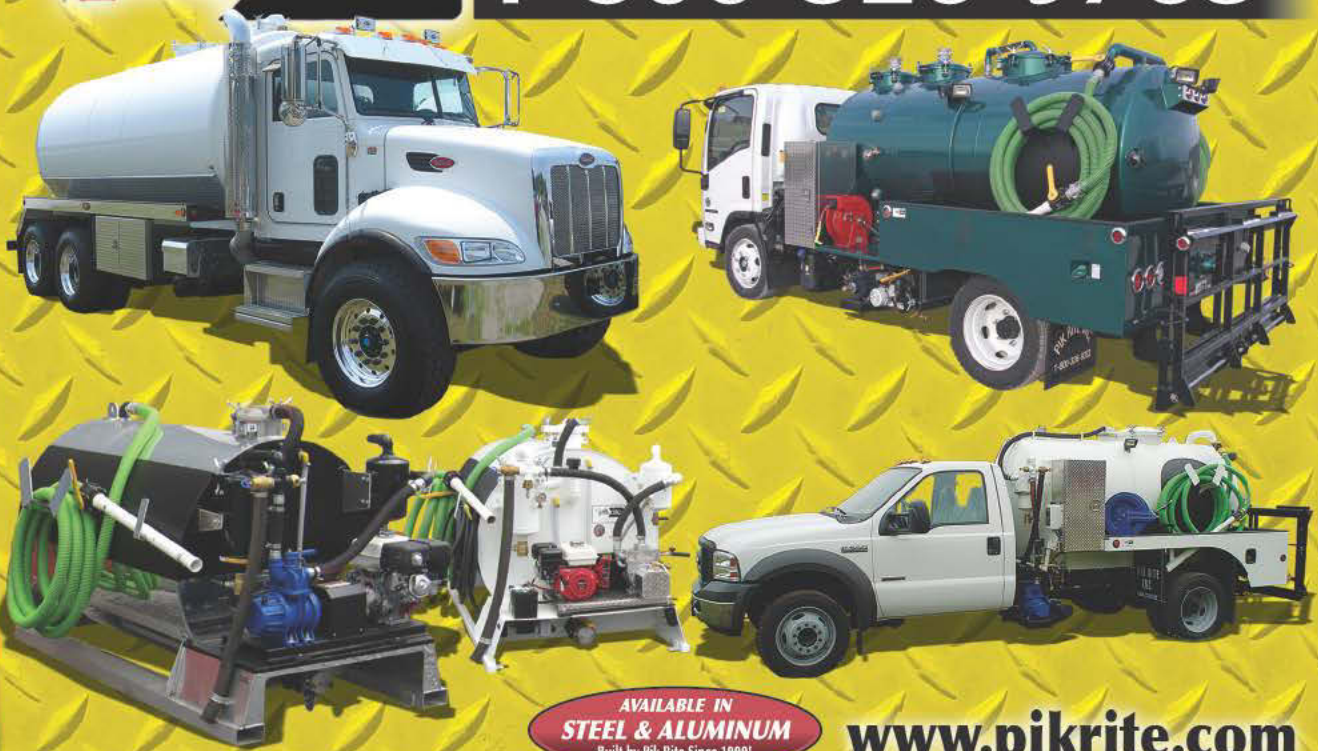
Today, information like a prospect’s name, phone number, email address, portable sanitation needs, notable comments and what service they have used in the past can all be kept on a laptop, smart phone or iPad and accessed

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OTHER GAME CHANGERS

A face-to-face meeting with a prospect is less likely than it was in the past. If a prospect suggests a meeting, by all means oblige, but it's not the given it once was. Companies are understaffed and people are overworked. They're likely to prefer you email them a proposal to look over at their convenience.

Another point I made in my original column was that making a sale can be a long process.

"It can take months, or even years, to go from initial contact to unloading portable toilets at a job site. So when you follow up with prospects, be inviting and welcoming, not annoying or desperate. Don't go overboard," I wrote.

That still rings true, but today you have more tools at your disposal to use in nurturing the relationship. Use networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook to connect with prospects and keep them up to date with what's happening at your company without pressuring or bothering them. You can also follow their activities on social networking sites and watch for opportunities to contact them about something specific rather than just randomly checking in.

While prospecting may have changed in some ways, the fact remains that it is necessary for anyone who wants to grow their business. Take a good look at how you are prospecting. Upgrading to a more customer-focused approach may make it more productive. ■

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The Great Outdoors



Unhappy being cooped up in a factory job, Canada's Dan Grenier found his dream job getting outside and running a portable sanitation service route **By Ken Wysocky** Photos by Chris Seto



Dan Grenier loves to work outdoors. So when he heard that his brother-in-law and his friend Wayne Fazzari's cousin were selling a portable restroom business called Porta-Plus Portables, he jumped at the opportunity to leave a factory job in 2005 and enter a new career running a service route and meeting people.

"I'm just not an inside worker," says Grenier, who once had a construction job. "I took the factory job because it was good pay, but I really wanted to get back outside. So Wayne and I looked at the business and felt we could do something with it."

Today, Grenier and Fazzari co-own the company, which is based in Guelph, Ont., Canada, and employs two other workers. About half of the company's business revenues come from construction (including high-rise restroom units) and municipal park rentals, and the other half comes from special event rentals. The company also provides commercial snowplowing to maintain cash flow during the winter.

The company owns about 350 restrooms, most of them manufactured by PolyJohn Enterprises and a few from PolyPortables Inc. The company also owns three service trucks: a 1997 Ford F-450 with a 350-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater steel tank; a 2011 Dodge 5500 with a 500-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank; and a 2012 Dodge 5500 with a steel tank that holds 500 gallons of waste/120 gallons of freshwater and 180 gallons of brine water. Vacutrax Ltd. built all the trucks, which feature Wallenstein pumps, made by Elmira Machine Industries Inc.

The Porta-Plus crew is shown in the company yard. They are, left to right, Jason Patriquin, Mike Gilliam, Dan Grenier, Wayne Fazzari, and Yanon Begg.

Porta-Plus also owns three pickup trucks – a 2006 Ford F-250, a 2013 GMC 1500 and a 2013 GMC 2500HD – and two Western snowplows, made by Douglas Dynamics LLC. *(continued)*



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- **Raising the business to new heights**

During the last three years, Porta-Plus has provided specialty, high-rise restrooms for workers at about a half dozen construction projects at a

university in nearby Waterloo. Grenier says prior good service experiences with Porta-Plus prompted job site supervisors to ask the company to supply the restrooms for the projects (18-story, condo-style apartments for university housing).

The company owns 10 PolyJohn high-rise units. The restrooms are mounted on wheels and are shorter than typical units – only about 5 feet tall – so they fit into construction elevators. They are wheeled around the floor where they're located – typically one unit for every three floors. "It's a productivity issue," Grenier explains. "If a guy has to go from the 16th floor

Construction projects around Waterloo, Ontario, keep 10 PolyJohn high-rise units working for Porta-Plus. Grenier inspects a unit to be raised for placement.

down and back up to go to the bathroom, twice a day, you could easily waste 45 minutes a day ... maybe even an hour if a guy has to wait 10 or 15 minutes for an elevator that's also being used to move other supplies and tradesmen around."

Workers bring the units down to a ground-level deck area for cleaning. "We come in before workers get there, usually around 4 or 4:30 a.m.," Grenier says. "That's a big selling point because we don't have a truck there while other trucks are trying to deliver materials and supplies, which really frees up their job site in terms of traffic congestion."

(continued)

Making a little girl's Christmas dream come true

By nature of the business, liquid-waste professionals wear many hats. But Dan Grenier added a novel new one to the list this past holiday – a red Santa hat – enroute to helping a little girl receive a most unusual Christmas gift.

The co-owner of Porta-Plus Portables in Guelph, Ont., assumed his role as jolly old St. Nick after taking a phone call from Emma Palmer, also of Guelph, about one week before Christmas. Turns out that Palmer's three-year-old daughter, Hannah, didn't want a doll or even two front teeth for Christmas; she wanted a portable restroom.

"At first, I thought it was my friends playing a joke on me, because they've attempted it before," Grenier says. "I thought they got a woman on the phone this time to throw me off.

"But as I listened to her story a little more, I realized she was very serious about renting a restroom for her little girl," he continues. "We'd had a couple units out at a renovation project at a public school just around the corner from her house, and for some reason, her daughter was fixated with them."

Palmer had talked to a dozen other area operators who wanted to either charge full price or declined to rent her a restroom. Grenier decided he could do it for \$50 to cover the fuel and labor it would take to drop off and pick up a unit.

On Christmas Eve, Grenier delivered the unit while Hannah was at a grandparent's house. He put it in a corner of the driveway and covered it with a tarp so Hannah wouldn't see it. Later that day, he returned with a gift bag containing a small coin bank shaped like a

portable restroom. It held a surprise for Hannah's parents: the \$50 they gave him for the rental fee.

"That way she could always have a restroom, and they could put the money in an education fund," Grenier explains. "They were concerned how Hannah would react when I came to take away the restroom, and I figured the penny bank – which I got from PolyJohn – would help ease the transition."

Come the next morning, Hannah was disappointed when she didn't see a portable restroom under the family's Christmas tree. But she was elated when her parents led her outside and removed the tarp, revealing the restroom, complete with a bow attached.

"She wouldn't even use the washroom inside the house while that unit was outside," chuckles Grenier, who picked up the restroom the following weekend, under the guise that he was one of Santa's elves assigned to bring the unit back to the North Pole.

All in all, Grenier enjoyed his brief stint as Santa Dan, noting he was happy to help make the little girl's Christmas wish come true. And one imagines that Hannah's parents are hoping that the gift their daughter wants most next Christmas will more easily fit down a chimney.



Dan Grenier played Santa Claus for Hannah Palmer, 3, who asked her parents for a portable restroom for a Christmas present. He placed a ribbon and bow on a PolyJohn PJN3 restroom and left it in the family's driveway. He returned later to have his photo taken with Hannah. (Photos courtesy of Porta-Plus Portables)

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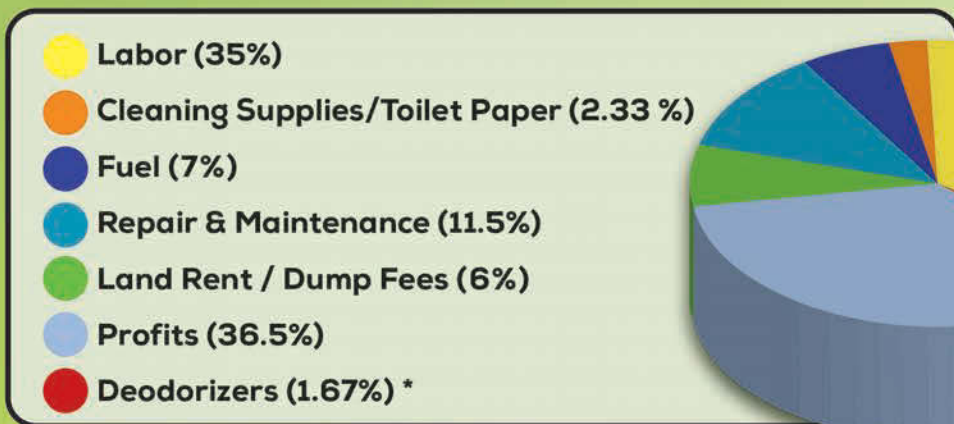
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• **Landing and keeping municipal contacts**

To ensure steadier work, maintain cash flow and increase scheduling efficiency, Porta-Plus relies on multi-year contracts with three local municipalities to supply and service restrooms for city parks. That usually entails servicing about 150 units located at recreation-related sites – soccer fields, baseball diamonds, tennis courts and the like – from May 1 through September or October. Contracts generally run for two or three years.

To minimize the odds of losing money due to rising business expenses, such as fuel, the first year or two are locked into a fixed price, with the second or third year open for renegotiation. “If the municipality is happy with the renegotiated price, the contract goes on,” Grenier says. “If not, the contract goes back to tender [rebid]. Hopefully, providing good service makes the difference. If you’re asking for a \$2 or \$3 increase per restroom per month, the service you provide has to be worth the increase.”



• **Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow**

Grenier had previous experience plowing snow, so it was a no-brainer to add that service to generate revenue during winter, when dramatically fewer restrooms are out on rental sites. “When we started out, we had only 24 or 25 units out in winter,” Grenier recalls. “So to keep cash flow coming in, we started plowing snow. We already had quite a few connections in town for that kind of work.”

Grenier runs one truck and hires a seasonal employee to run a second plow. “It’s definitely something you have to have a knack for ... it’s not the kind of job where you can just put on a plow and start to plow parking lots. I’ve seen some guys see other guys plowing snow, then decide to go buy a plow and start doing it themselves. But if you get into a big storm and don’t know what you’re doing, you can get into trouble.”

Grenier says he’s always looking at the long-range weather forecast to coordinate plowing with scheduled restroom work. “But if a huge storm occurs, our customers know they won’t get serviced until the storm clears,” he adds. “I won’t risk putting my drivers on the road in a storm.”

• **It’s all about the relationships**

A local truck-repair outfit that provides preferred treatment for contractors such as Porta-Plus is an invaluable business partner, Grenier notes. If a small repair is required – say, a burst hose, a broken fan belt or a



Dan Grenier, right, meets with mechanic James Rooyackers, left and Norm’s Esso garage owner Brian Flewelling, under the hood of one of their service vehicles to review equipment maintenance.

flat tire – the repair shop will pull a mechanic off another job and quickly do the repair. “When we first started doing business with them, we had older trucks that frequently required repairs,” Grenier says. “We’re one of their larger customers. Now that we have newer trucks, repairs are drastically reduced, and the repairs we need are easy fixes. We’re lucky because there are about four different parts suppliers within blocks of the repair shop, so it’s not an issue to find repair parts quickly.”

“I talk to the job super and discuss the location. We want easy access for tradesmen and for my guy to come in and do service. They don’t always know how the truck needs to be situated to clean the restrooms.”

- Dan Grenier

• **Location, location, location**

Grenier says part of providing good service to customers involves taking extra time to educate site supervisors about a small but very important aspect of restroom rental: easy access to the units. “Many times a guy will tell us to just put it in a corner, but I like to make sure it’s where we can get to it easily for service,” he notes. “So I talk to the job super and discuss the location. We want easy access for tradesmen and for my guy to come in and do service. They don’t always know how the truck needs to be situated to clean the restrooms. We’re looking at about 20-foot-long trucks, so I like to make sure our drivers have enough room to operate without causing headaches on a job site.” ■

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Jeff Wigley is president of the Portable Sanitation Association International and co-owner of Pit Stop Sanitation Services, Inc., in Atlanta. Contact him at 770/439-2888 or by email at wjwigley@bellsouth.net.



Explain The Value of Portable Sanitation Services to Your Construction Customers

By Jeff Wigley

What would you think if two or three times a day everyone at your office left to go to the bathroom at the local gas station? Most likely you would install a bathroom or rent a portable restroom as soon as possible.

Construction companies are no different. They know it would cost them a fortune in lost time if their workers were running down to the local gas station every time they needed to use the bathroom.

As an example, let's say a job site had 10 workers each making \$20 an hour. If each one went to the local gas station once a day to use the restroom it would take at least 15 minutes to drive there and back. Therefore, each trip would cost the construction company a minimum of \$5 per day in lost production. Multiply \$5 times 10 workers and that is \$50 per day. An average month has about 22 workdays. At \$50 per day, that would equal \$1,100.

What do we charge construction companies for a month of professional service? Whatever the fee, it's a small fraction of the amount they incur in lost wages from those trips to the gas station. And it's a bargain. If they were paying \$200 per month they would still be saving close to \$1000 in production time.

What does that say to all of us? Hopefully, it tells us that we should value our service enough to charge a fair price for it. As contractors, we should set our fees at a level that ensures we can continue to provide professional service and earn a profit. Yes, that seems scary to many operators, but I have found that my customers appreciate my service enough to pay a fair price for quality service.

If your service is exceptional, and you explain to your customers that the cost of doing business keeps rising, most of them are going to stay with you. If you lose a few, then go find a potential customer who is fed up with horrible service and they will be willing to pay your price. ■

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A DIFFERENT PATH

Texan Nita Bailey bucks the conventional approach to marketing portable sanitation services and builds a business for growth

BY KEN WYSOCKY
Photos by John Everett

In an industry where conformity is common, Nita Bailey wants to stand out like a color picture in a black-and-white photo exhibit. Not only is she a woman in a male-dominated field, Bailey relishes taking unorthodox approaches to running RS Waste Services Inc., the portable-restroom business she co-owns in Houston.

How unorthodox? Think vinyl-wrapped bride and groom restrooms for weddings. Restrooms that resemble British phone booths. Advertising on LED billboards. Placing palm trees and other temporary landscaping outside restroom trailers. A fully integrated branding strategy that visually unifies everything from the company website to restroom decals to email signatures for company employees. And structuring the company like a corporation.

In short, Bailey believes no detail is too small when it comes to differentiating RS Services from numerous competitors. And if pursuing those details involves taking the road less traveled in the portable-restroom industry, all the better.

"To me, you should always be changing," says Bailey, who's the majority owner of the company; her partner is Roger Harp, the vice president of operations. "If you stay the same, you should expect the same thing year after year."

(continued)



Nita Bailey, co-owner of RS Waste Services, is shown with a trailer load of Picadilly Concepts portable restrooms.

RS Waste Services, Inc. Houston, Texas

Owners: Nita Bailey and Roger Harp

Founded: 1999

Employees: 12

Service area: 100-mile radius around Houston

Specialty: Portable sanitation

Affiliations: Portable Sanitation Association International, Women's Business Enterprise Alliance, International Special Events Society, Texas Festivals and Events Association

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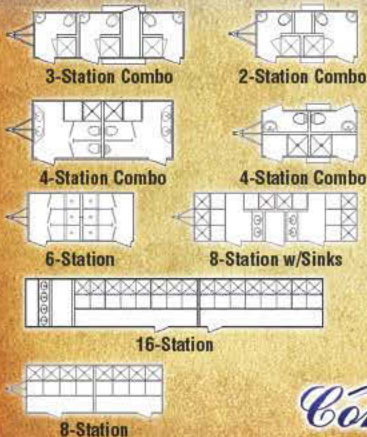
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Bailey's formula has worked well since she and her husband, Jay, started the business in 1999 (he retired in 2008; Harp joined the business in 2000). Since then, the company has grown to 12 employees from four, and annual gross revenue has increased substantially, including annual growth of about 20 percent for the last several years.

EQUIPPED FOR SUCCESS

The company's stable of equipment has grown, too. In 1999, RS Waste Services owned 28 restrooms and one vacuum truck. Today, it maintains 700 restrooms, mostly made by PolyPortables Inc. That total includes about a dozen handicapped-accessible and ADA-compliant units, 20 units from Piccadilly Concepts that look like English phone booths, and 12 High Tech II units from Satellite Industries Inc. that feature flush toilets, sinks and solar lighting.

To service restrooms, the company now owns four trucks: a 2011 Isuzu NQR with a 700-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank built by RS Waste Services; a 2007 Isuzu with a 600-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank built by Best Enterprises Inc.; a 2012 Ford F-550 with a 900-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater Progress aluminum tank built by



"We need to embrace the industry we're in — be proud that we provide a wonderful service for people. The more we believe in what we do, the better the industry's image can become."

NITA BAILEY

Tank Technologies and Supply Co.; and a 2012 Isuzu NPR flatbed truck. The Isuzu vacuum trucks use Conde pumps, made by Westmoor Ltd., and the F-550 is equipped with a Masport pump. In what amounts to side-by-side testing, Bailey says the company is using three different kinds of tank material to see which one holds up best.

In addition, RS Waste Service owns about two dozen hand-wash stations made by PolyPortables Inc., Satellite Industries Inc, and PolyJohn Enterprises; a 12-foot restroom trailer from Alpha Mobile Solutions; and 45 plastic holding tanks made by PolyPortables (most hold 250 gallons except for three that hold 310 gallons). The company uses the tanks to capture graywater from restroom trailers rented for construction sites until sewer systems are installed, Bailey says.

The RS Waste Services crew includes, left to right, Nita Bailey, Matthew Stephenson, Roger Harp, Gil Beleele, Andre Scott and Tre Green.

CAREER SWITCH

It should come as no surprise that Bailey bucked conventional wisdom and left a great, long-term job – vice president of North American sales for a manufacturer of above-ground storage tank covers – in 2010 to focus full-time on the portable sanitation company.

"I'm a little bit of a workaholic and wanted to do both jobs," she says. "People thought I was crazy to walk away from a good job, but I felt like the time was right to do it."

Bailey is always ready to try something new to market her company. In this case, she rented an LED billboard along I-45 with seven other companies to advertise her services.

One of the first things she did was use her prior experience to restructure the company as a corporation and rebrand it to reflect a more professional image, all

of which she felt would position it better for growth. She also started the process of obtaining certification as a woman-owned business.

"Before, business just sort of came our way," she recalls. "But when the economy started changing, we realized we couldn't keep operating the same way we had for the last 10 years. We needed to come up with a game plan. I didn't want the market to dictate how we did ... I wanted to ride the market whether it was up or down – be prepared for it."



(continued)



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SHARPEN THE FOCUS

To restructure, Bailey split the company into two divisions: Rest Stop Portable Toilets, concentrating on construction rentals, which accounted for 95 percent of the company's gross revenue in 2012; and 'mode (a trademarked name, it's a play on the word "commode" and by definition means "appearance and style"), which caters to special-event rentals.

Bailey saw more growth opportunities in a niche within the special-events market, which would offer higher profit margins and decrease the company's dependence on construction.

"Everyone jumped on the luxury restroom-trailer trend, but that's really high end," she adds. "But there's a market segment ignored between high-end luxury trailers and construction units." That's why she ordered the flushing Picadilly Concepts units, which she considers a step up from standard restrooms. To further differentiate, Bailey also puts plants like shrubs and palm trees - maybe even poinsettias during the Christmas season - around the skirting of the company's restroom

The RS Waste Services' mode crew sets up the company's Alpha Mobile Solutions trailer for an event. Flowers and plants are often used to create a special presentation for the restroom trailer.



Get the Most Out of Trade Shows

Nita Bailey, the majority owner of Houston's RS Waste Services Inc., knows plenty about working trade shows. During a career that included 27 years spent in sales for a large corporation, she estimates she's attended close to 200 shows.

One of her tips for getting the most out of time spent at a trade show like the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International involves the old maxim: Listen more, talk less.

"Try to stay focused on what you're there to do, which is to learn," she says. "And don't be afraid to walk into a booth and ask for information."

The same rule holds true if you're a PRO on the exhibitor side, say at a local wedding show or Chamber of Commerce business-to-business event. People staffing booths should put less emphasis on talking about their products and more on listening to and understanding the needs of potential customers.

Bailey also suggests trade show attendees plan an itinerary, just as if they were planning a vacation. Examine the list of exhibitors and write down booths you want to visit. Without such a plan, it's easy to get caught up in a show and end up missing the products and people you really came to see.

Mingling and meeting new people also is essential, whether you're an exhibitor or attendee. "Don't go to your room when the trade show is over for the day," she suggests. "And don't just stay glued to the group you may have come with. You can't sell products to colleagues ... instead, go out to dinner with a potential customer or supplier."

Another point exhibitors should consider: Thoroughly assess booth personnel to ensure your company is putting its best foot forward. Even company owners should honestly evaluate if they're the best people to represent the company, she says.

"Booth personnel must have the personality and the desire to be there," she says. "If they don't, find someone else to go."

"When the economy started changing, we realized we couldn't keep operating the same way we had for the last 10 years. We needed to come up with a game plan. I didn't want the market to dictate how we did ... I wanted to ride the market whether it was up or down - be prepared for it."

NITA BAILEY

trailer or around clusters of event restrooms. Inside, she adds fresh flowers, specialty soaps and hand lotions.

She started doing this after hearing at an event service tradeshow that if women won't use a portable restroom, they go home sooner, and the group sponsoring the event loses revenue. The challenge is to attract and keep patrons at an event, and get them to come back again - and construction restrooms won't do the trick, Bailey says.

Bailey's penchant for trying something new extends to marketing, where she advertises along with seven other companies on an LED billboard along I-45. For a monthly fee, RS Waste Services receives nine seconds of exposure per cycle.

"People probably think I'm crazy for doing that, too," she says, noting she already placed some of the Picadilly units at a busy intersection along I-45 and received a lot of inquiries about them. "But no one can say if it'll work or not, because no one has ever done it around here. The cost of that billboard for a month is a lot less than having 1,000 postcards designed, printed and mailed."

LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

To Bailey, effective marketing means sweating the details. For instance, when she or employees send out an email, the recipient will see a uniform signature graphic with a professional look. It shows job title, contact information and the logos for Rest Stop and 'mode.

"It's a very simple way to change and improve your image for a minimal cost," she points out. "These are all things that need to be addressed when you're thinking about the image of your company."

Another example are company decals on restrooms. She doesn't believe in plastering large decals on all four sides of an event unit; instead, she prefers a smaller, more discreet and attractive decal placed on the interior of a restroom. If people are paying to rent the unit, she feels they'd rather see something other than company decals on the sides - like bride and groom vinyl wraps that adorn a pair of the company's High Tech II restrooms.



Bailey says the pair of restrooms is a great alternative for a cost-conscious bride and groom who can't afford a luxury restroom trailer. She's open to the idea of wrapping restrooms to fit a themed event; the cost ranges from \$150 to \$300 per unit, depending on the image. If the theme is universal enough that the company can reuse it, RS Services covers the cost.

For Bailey, differentiation through new ideas is as critical as simply promoting quality service. "Everyone says they have good service, so it's an old buzzword that's lost its meaning," she says. "If you think that good service is just part of being in business, which I do, then you need to think of other ways to stand apart."

Part of that equation is showing pride in the service you provide. In other words, stop thinking of portable sanitation as a "crappy job," she says.

"I believe everyone has the right to clean, sanitary conditions," she says. "We need to embrace the industry we're in - be proud that we provide a wonderful service for people. The more we believe in what we do, the better the industry's image can become." ■

Co-owner Roger Harp returns the hose to RS Waste Services' newest pumping rig, a 2012 Ford F-550 with a tank from Progress VacTank and built out by Tank Technologies and Supply Co.

MORE INFO

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Cleaning and Maintenance

By Craig Mandli

Keeping an inventory of portable restrooms looking clean and smelling fresh is critically important to the success of a portable sanitation contractor. These products are designed to control odor, remove graffiti and efficiently wash your units so you can get them back out in service and earning money.

ODOR CONTROL

WASTE TANK TREATMENT PACKS

Porta-Treat packs from Bionetix contain natural and safe aerobic bacteria that digest odor-causing compounds and waste. The bacillus spores used have been shown to reduce large waste particles that settle to the bottom. The cellulose present in toilet paper is reduced to odorless carbon dioxide and water. The bacteria release extracellular enzymes to help minimize waste so the bacteria have better access. By reducing waste and odor-causing compounds, the holding tank is left fresh and clean, reducing downtime and maintenance costs. Simply toss the water-soluble pouches into the holding tank. **514/457-2914; www.bionetix-international.com.**



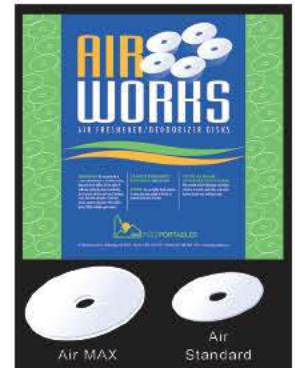
TOSS-IN RESTROOM DEODORIZER

Glacier Bay Dry Toss Paks from Five Peaks provide the same effective odor control, fragrance and deep blue color mask as liquid deodorant with the convenience of pre-measured powder, water-soluble, ready-to-use pouches. Drop a single Pak into the holding tank and add water. They are packaged in a stand up, resealable gusset bag, reducing the risk of exposure to moisture. They are available in two strengths - normal to extreme conditions (heat and humidity) or special events/multiple services. They are formaldehyde-free, biodegradable and environmentally safe. **866/293-1502; www.fivepeaks.net.**



AIR FRESHENER DISCS

Air MAX air freshener discs from Green Way Products by PolyPortables contain more odor-fighting fragrance oil than Air Standard discs, extending effective usage and reducing service times. The discs have 20 percent more surface area, releasing a greater volume of fragrance. They are available in the company's standard fragrances, as well as a fragrance of the month. Simply place the disc on a hook behind the vent stack or place it on the toilet paper rod outside the dispenser, securing it in place with the lock. **800/241-7951; www.greenwayproducts.net.**



PORTABLE RESTROOM DEODORIZER

Biosorb portable restroom deodorizer from Johnny's Choice by Chemcorp Industries is available in liquid or dry water-soluble portion packs. The main odor-control ingredients are blends of non-pathogenic facultative bacteria and enzymes. They are safe to use, and are biodegradable. The products contain choice perfumes and a non-staining royal blue color. **888/729-6478; www.johnnyschoice.com.**



TIME-RELEASED ODOR GUARD

Odor Guard SUPER Concentrated from Liquid Waste Industries is a time-released, powerful, biodegradable, environmentally friendly, non-formaldehyde agent, which breaks down paper and waste to reduce mounding. It works in tough conditions, and contains a long-lasting, non-staining dye. If used properly, it is never overwhelmed in high traffic areas. It provides effective odor control throughout the service week and in extreme summer conditions. It is available in multiple fragrances. **877/445-5511; www.lwiinc.com.**



NON-TOXIC RESTROOM DEODORIZER

Portable restroom deodorizer from **Porta Pro Chem Co.** is non-toxic, non-allergenic and free from phosphates, formaldehyde, Dichlorobenzene, enzymes and heavy metals. It neutralizes odors by forming a non-volatile complex with the odorant. The chemistry safely bonds the odors in solution rather than chemically modifying them. It is environmentally safe and completely biodegradable. It is offered in full strength and economy concentrate, as well as ready-to-use. Many fragrance choices are available in totes, drums or pails. **888/673-5846; www.ccountrysupply.com.**



PORTABLE RESTROOM FOAM SHIELD

St. George's Foam Shield from **Servant Products** focuses on improving the conditions of the portable restroom holding tank. The foaming product stops backsplash, suppresses smell, keeps bugs out and improves the tank's visual appeal. The product is biodegradable, safe to use and water efficient. **877/644-3626; www.stgfoam.com.**



ALL-NATURAL DEODORIZERS

Bio products from **Safe-T-Fresh** include liquid and powder packets in a variety of strengths, formulated with natural enzymes and biocides to reduce odors and break down waste naturally. There are seven strains of bacteria and enzymes in each product. Designed to work in normal temperatures to high heat, the active ingredients block the formation of odor-causing bacteria before they multiply. They also break down waste to prevent piling, a main contributor to odors in portable restrooms. Ingredients dissolve residual waste that collects on sidewalls and tubing in the tanks. **877/764-7297; www.safetfresh.com.**



PORTABLE RESTROOM DEODORANT

Potty Fresh Plus XL from **Surco Products** is a strong, non-formaldehyde restroom deodorant that provides effective odor control. In extreme conditions, including high heat and traffic areas, use 1 to 2 ounces (30-60 mL) per 5 gallons (19 L) of water. Popular fragrances include black cherry and bubble gum. **800/556-0111; www.surcopt.com.**



CONCENTRATED ODOR CONTROL

Exodor PT-50 Supreme from **Walex Products** is a concentrated odor control formula for extreme conditions, including heat and overuse. It utilizes the company's **WAVE 2** technology, and contains additives that break down paper and waste to reduce mounding and prevent scale build up. It also contains Everblue non-greening and non-staining color to keep tank contents dark blue throughout the service week. **800/338-3155; www.walex.com.**



TIME-RELEASED DEODORIZERS

True-X Series Deodorizers from **J&J Chemical** are formulated with time-released ingredients that eliminate odors, mounding and scale as the waste load increases from start to finish. They are suitable for use year round. This powerful biodegradable, non-formaldehyde liquid is ideal for extreme conditions and heavy traffic, and is available in all of the company's exclusive fragrances. **800/343-3303; www.jjchem.com.**



CASE STUDY

Fragrant lube oil solves vacuum pump odor issue

PROBLEM: Waste Management Corp., a portable sanitation company in Houston, had a customer order 600 restrooms for a plant's month-long maintenance shutdown. More than 3,000 skilled maintenance workers used these restrooms and worked around them. When the vacuum truck serviced the restrooms, workers complained about noxious fumes released while pumping the holding tanks of the toilets.

SOLUTION: **Service Sales Company** was contacted to find a solution. The company found a high-grade vacuum pump lubricating oil with a powerful solvent-based fragrance oil that would not separate from the lube oil. After adding this blend to the pump oil reservoir, the complaints ceased.

RESULT: The plant management was pleased with the portable restroom operator's efforts, and has used the company's service every year since. Service Sales now markets the fragrance oil solution under the brand name **Sweet Oil**. **800/940-1046.**

PRESSURE WASHERS/CLEANERS

TANK-CLEANING MACHINE

The **EZ-8** tank-cleaning machine from **Gamajet** features a fluid-driven, versatile and durable design and is lightweight for easy handling and maneuverability. It can be customized to the customer's needs, with options including directional nozzles for use in portable restroom tanks and vessels. It eliminates the need for confined-space entry, reducing time spent cleaning. It combines pressure and flow to create high-impact cleaning jets that deliver impingement force by rotating in a repeatable and reliable 360-degree pattern. It has a flow rate of 25 to 130 gpm and a pressure range of 20 to 1,000 psi. **877/426-2538; www.gamajet.com.**



ELECTRIC DIRECT-DRIVE PRESSURE WASHER

The **Steam Jenny** electric cold pressure washer from **Jenny Products** can be used in enclosed areas where gas-powered machines can't be used. It is powered by a Marathon or Baldor electric motor, depending on the model, and ranges from 1.5 to 10 hp. It is available with either single-phase GFCI or three-phase power requirements. It has industrial-grade triplex ceramic plunger pumps, pressure ratings between 1,000 and 4,000 psi, and flow rates between 1.5 and 4.8 gpm. Features include a seven-gauge steel chassis, heavy-duty unloader valve, safety relief valve, thermal relief valve and high-capacity inlet in-line water strainer. It also comes with an insulated trigger gun, a 50-foot hose with quick coupling and a series of 0- to 40-degree-angle color-coded nozzles. **814/445-3400; www.steamjenny.com.**



TRUCK-MOUNTED SPRAY SYSTEM

The truck-mounted **Pathfinders** spray system from **Satellite Industries** has been proven to reduce mold and bacteria by 86 percent over traditional cleaning methods. Using the system to apply a hospital-grade disinfectant manufactured by **ECOLAB** is a safe way to instantly kill mold and bacteria, especially in hard-to-reach places such as between the tank and walls. In addition, the disinfectant removes rust and calcium deposits, and leaves a shiny residue that brightens the restroom and resists graffiti and dust. **800/328-3332; www.satelliteindustries.com.**



TRAILER PRESSURE WASHER

The **TRS-2500** trailer pressure washer from **Shark Pressure Washers & Jetters** delivers up to 3,500 psi and 200-degree water. It is ideal for cleaning in the field where a water supply is not always available. Features include a high-density, 200-gallon white polyethylene water tank, 4.7 gpm pressure washer skid with electric start and generator, high- and low-pressure hose reels, two saddle boxes and a rock guard. The unit's cool bypass allows extended run times by circulating water back through the tank. It has a 39-inch tongue with swing-away hinge for easy storage. **800/771-1881; www.sharkpw.com.**



COLD-WATER PRESSURE WASHER

The 4,200-psi cold-water pressure washer from **Water Cannon** features a Honda GX 390 electric start engine with a low oil shutdown mechanism to ensure it never runs without proper lubrication. It also features a thermo-sensor to prevent pump overheating. It is constructed of aircraft-grade aluminum, and has two 10-inch oversized pneumatic tires, two dual-padded shock-absorbing feet, a mesh stainless steel inlet water filter, an adjustable pressure throttle and a 3/4-inch cold-rolled steel axle. It comes complete with a belt drive RK Series AR triplex plunger pump, or can be upgraded to an HP Series General or the 5CP Series CAT triplex plunger pump. **800/333-9274; www.watercannon.com.**



GRAFFITI REMOVERS

SPRAY-ON GRAFFITI REMOVER

Wipe Out graffiti remover from **Chempace Corporation** removes marker, paint, pen and pencil marks from all types of surfaces. It can dissolve difficult soils such as grease and tar easily. Apply on the desired area, let it stand a few moments, and wash, wipe or hose off. **800/423-5350; www.chempace.com.**



WATER-BASED GRAFFITI REMOVER

Certified Graffiti Remover from **Nilodor Deep Blue** is a ready-to-use water-based paint and ink remover that safely breaks down the bond between paint and the surface. With a few simple steps, unwanted graffiti is easily removed from both hard and carpeted surfaces without harsh chemicals and toxins. It is nonflammable, biodegradable, and can be used on brick and tile, concrete, stucco, aluminum, fiberglass, plastic, formica, plexiglass, stainless steel, metal, stone and rock. This formula will remove acrylic, primer, oil and water-based enamel, permanent markers, lacquers, aerosol spray paint and sealants. **800/443-4321; www.nilodor.com. ■**



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Richard Banks, national sales director for US Fleet Tracking, guides an Expo visitor through the key features of the Web-based GPS system.

Expo visitors get an up-close look at latest fleet management technology

By Ed Wodalski

US Fleet Tracking's return to this year's Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International provided an opportunity to introduce visitors to its live GPS tracking system.

"We had a good response. We were very pleased with the show itself," says Richard Banks, national sales director for US Fleet Tracking. "We were very well received. We've written quite a bit of business."

The Web-based interface updates every 10 seconds and can be used on any mobile device - Android, iPhone, iPad, Kindle - or Web-enabled PC.

Using the program, a fleet owner can have a host of reporting functions: stop-start, aggressive driving and excessive idling, Banks explains. "We have preventive maintenance systems built into it that allow you to schedule for oil changes and tire rotations, so it's a complete package."

The system can monitor any number of vehicles. There's no software to install or service contract to purchase. "We don't lock customers into a long-term commitment," he says.

Text alerts and email reports provide fleet managers with at-a-glance updates on unauthorized movement, excessive speed and geo-fence alerts. It also can be used to guide drivers through unfamiliar routes.

The software keeps 90 days of history. "We can keep up to a year at no additional cost," Banks says. "It allows you to go back and look at your fleet two months ago, where somebody was, what they were doing; or if there were some billing issues, you can see how long they were at the job site."

The system also ties into the National Weather Service. An overlay provides a comprehensive look at current and approaching weather conditions, enabling drivers to take evasive action. Another feature includes live traffic data that warns drivers and dispatchers of traffic delays and road closures. 405/749-1105; www.usft.com. ■

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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.



A Cure for Corrosion

A FRESHWATER TANK IS RUSTING FROM THE INSIDE AND A PRO WANTS TO KNOW HOW TO STOP THE DAMAGE

By Bob Carlson

QUESTION: One of our trucks has a 250-gallon freshwater tank that is rusting inside, which is a problem when we have to fill sinks on a service route. There is only a 2-inch fill opening on top so we can't get inside. Is there an additive or treatment we can use to remedy the problem or do we have to cut a trapdoor into the tank?

*James Lavarone
Mill Valley, Calif.*

ANSWER: You're not the first portable sanitation contractor to encounter this situation. When it comes to ensuring clean water, there is no quick fix when rust starts attacking carbon steel. Many freshwater tanks have been built with only a 2-inch fitting on top. Unless the tank is coated with an approved epoxy or is built from stainless steel, it is not possible to avoid rust.

Carbon steel, water, and air create an environment where rust will form. Rust causes discoloration of your freshwater supply and ultimately shortens the life span of your water tank.

I've known PROs who attempt to head off rust by pouring various chemicals into the tank, but there is no way to guarantee all interior surfaces are coated. I've heard the suggestion of replacing the 2-inch fitting with an 8-inch opening, the logic being that a technician could get an arm in and try to spray the interior with a rust inhibitor of some kind. Don't waste your time.

In your case, the best thing to do is install a manway on top of the tank. With the opening big enough for someone to get inside, you could then be assured of coating the interior completely.

If you're looking for reasonably "clean" water, you can coat the tank with a marine emulsion available at stores that sell paint and coatings. Sometimes cleaning the inside of the tank and applying a couple of coats of

shop primer will do the trick to halt the progress of rust. However, remember this will yield "reasonably clean" water, not pure water.

You're not done yet. If you're trying to get a coating suitable for drinking water, the simple "trapdoor" won't work. It most likely would be acceptable at wash stations, but for drinking water, a couple more steps are required.

First, understand you'll need a carbon steel tank that is sandblasted and coated with an approved epoxy for drinking water. In an existing tank, this means opening the barrel of the tank by cutting off the head. At that point, you'd have access to sandblast the tank interior and coat both the tank interior and the head you removed.

Once the head is welded back in place, the weld seam must be protected. This is where the manway comes into play. A technician climbs in and coats the interior weld seam and you're ready to haul drinkable water.

This process is time-consuming and expensive. The best time to remedy this situation is during construction of a new tank. The manufacturer can coat the interior with epoxy and install appropriate compartment access points.

Another solution is to find space on the truck for a separate 250-gallon stainless steel tank. Or replace the rusting tank with a new stainless steel tank. This allows for clean water, avoids rust, and - if built properly - the tank should outlast the truck you install it on. Stainless will cost more, but eliminate concern over rust.

THE CASE OF THE COLLAPSING HOSE

QUESTION: For some reason my vacuum hose keeps collapsing. It is good, steel-reinforced hose, but it's causing problems on the job site when I'm pumping.

*Shane Benson
Pierre, S. D.*

ANSWER: Some vacuum hoses are composed of an inner skin, steel reinforcement and an outer skin. The inner skin is attached by use of an oil-based glue. This type of hose works fine for normal portable restroom work. So most likely your problem is that you're pumping oil into your system and it is compromising the hose's glue system. When that happens, the hose collapses on the inside and your pumping stops. There are solid rubber hoses with steel reinforcement available at most hose supply businesses. Explain your problem and they should be able to provide you the right type of hose. ■

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PRODUCT NEWS

ROM restroom service unit

The Flexi 1900/1100 portable restroom service system from ROM by empties and cleans 50 to 75 units a day. The 1,455-pound system mounts on 6.5- to 7.5-ton vehicles and is available with a Honda gasoline engine or PTO-powered version. The system has a 1,900-liter (502 gallons) vacuum tank and three freshwater tanks. A 300-liter tank (79.25 gallons) is designed for use with a pressure washer. The two 400-liter tanks (106 gallons) are for filling restrooms. www.rombv.com. ■



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