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# JUMPING RIGHT IN

David and Nicole Spencer recognize potential in a flagging restroom company and pounce on it

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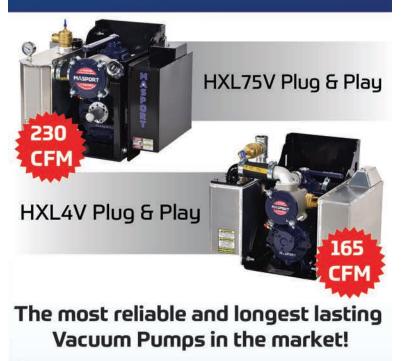


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# Follow These Tips for Greater Workplace Transparency

By Jim Kneiszel

Open and honest communication will set your restroom business up for worker loyalty and goodwill in the community

ransparency. It's been a popular buzzword in the business world for a while. The theory is that you will reap benefits — financial and otherwise — when you are more open and honest in communication with employees, customers and the general public. Make the details of your portable sanitation company as close to an open book as possible and you'll be paid off in goodwill, a loyal crew and growing revenue, according to many small-business experts.

If this was true at the beginning of 2020, when most PROs expected a rosy economic outlook, it's doubly important in the unpredictable days that lie ahead of us. The COVID-19 pandemic was a serious shock to every small business, and in its long-term fallout, you can expect feelings of confusion, fear and uncertainty among your employees, worry from your best clients who wonder if you are going to be around to serve them, and concern among friends and business acquaintances who want you to succeed.

Trust is an incredibly valuable commodity, especially in a seesawing economy. And you need to continue to cultivate that trust through thick and thin.

Over the past few years, I've talked to many established PROs and folks just starting out who saw vast opportunities on the horizon. Many were buying new equipment and continue to invest in new vacuum trucks, restrooms and specialty trailers to serve the growing needs of their customers.

Every contractor's story is different since the pandemic hit, but I sense that many have stayed busy, shifting priorities as special event work disappeared and government customers picked up. Others, I'm sure, have suffered greatly, unable to recoup the lost business and having a difficult time paying bills and making payroll. And there are probably many PROs stuck between these two scenarios, working hard and looking for new ways to get back on track.

Wherever you are on that spectrum, look for ways you can increase transparency in your business. Doing so will help you gain the respect of your team and the understanding of customers and the public. Here are a few ideas:

#### LAY YOUR CARDS ON THE TABLE IN COMPANY MEETINGS.

Your employees are probably coming in to work wondering what the future holds this week, next month and for the rest of the year. To the degree you feel comfortable, share details of your balance sheet — the revenue in, the dollars going out and how money is being made and spent.

It's a better human resources practice to know you are paying a competitive wage and explaining that to your workers. They will appreciate that you aren't playing games with them, and that's a good way to build loyalty in the 21st century workplace. Whether you remain flush with cash or worrying what the next six months will bring, your crew will be grateful to get the complete picture. All of your livelihoods are on the line, and it's better to be forthright now than surprising the team with news of a layoff down the road.

If the outlook is positive, your workers' minds can be put at ease and you can reinforce the need to keep up the good work. If the outlook is negative, this is your opportunity to ask the team to help you get back in the black. Ask front-line workers for their

ideas on how to build revenue, and take them seriously. They are out on the work sites talking to customers about service and making mental notes about how a route can run more efficiently. Explain that everyone on the payroll can have a big impact on the success or failure of the business.

#### **BE UPFRONT ABOUT WAGE AND SALARY INFORMATION.**

Based on the experience of most people who've been in the workforce for 20 years or more, the idea of sharing pay-related information with employees probably seems like a foreign idea ... and maybe a scary one. But experts say opening up about wage scales across your company goes a long way in convincing today's workers they are paid fairly.

The 2019 Compensation Programs & Practices Survey conducted by WorldatWork got responses from 348 private and public sector companies and found that:

- 42% of employers share a pay program design with employees.
- 38% share a base salary range for employees.
- 2% share actual pay levels for all employees.

With younger workers and the age of social media, wage transparency will become a bigger issue. In days gone by, it wasn't so easy for a worker to figure out if they were being paid comparably to workers at a similar business on the other side of town. No more. Young workers are better at networking — especially online — and don't feel it's necessary to keep their salary a secret. And they are comfortable jumping ship for a better wage.

It's a better human resources practice to know you are paying a competitive wage and explaining that to your workers. They will appreciate that you aren't playing games with them, and that's a good way to build loyalty in the 21st century workplace. And loyalty saves you lots of money and grief over having to recruit new employees over and over again.

#### LEVEL WITH CUSTOMERS IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD.

As is the case with most small businesses, this year has been like no other for portable sanitation contractors. Special event contracts were wiped out for the summer, and there are many uncertainties moving forward. Hopefully some of your other construction and municipal customers have stayed steady.

Reach out to all of your regular customers with occasional updates — reminding them you stand ready to serve them as their fortunes turn around. Tell them about the unique challenges you face and how you have reacted — such as by promoting hand-wash stations and emergency service. Remind them about your inventory and highlight how restrooms and accessories can be useful today. Now might be a time to offer specials to help customers ease their way back to profitability.

#### DO GOOD AND TELL THE COMMUNITY.

It's no time to withdraw from the community and suspend civic work or charitable projects that you were used to doing in the best times. Rather, go out and seek to do more for friends and neighbors in your hometown. If the youth sports team you usually sponsor isn't playing this year, give that money to another cause, like a food pantry or park improvements. If you have excess restroom inventory, look for ways to donate units to churches, homeless shelters or other nonprofit organizations.

And when you make a donation or provide a community service, send a press release to the local newspaper or radio station and let them know about it. Take every opportunity to talk about your business even if it means explaining the issues you've had to overcome this year. People will appreciate it when you shine a light on your business and continue to help others.

#### **OPEN FOR BUSINESS**

As the portable sanitation industry adjusts to constant change this year, add one more goal for your business: greater transparency. I hope you will find open and honest communication with employees and business partners refreshing and profitable. ■

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Your portable sanitation operation's location isn't just a storage shed; it's another tool for you and your technicians. This exclusive online story details how one Minnesota PRO designed a new shop that meets his team's needs and more. promonthly.com/featured

**1** The process of creating and implementing a business succession plan often means having honest and sometimes brutal discussions with other family members (and employees).

- 7 Steps for Creating a Smart Succession Plan



# THE NEW NORMAL Adapting in the Age of COVID-19

If you're still struggling to get your portable restroom operation on even footing after the first wave of the pandemic, you're not alone. Read more about virtual training resources available to help put your business back on solid ground.

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# OPEN THE DOOR Improve Workplace Communication

Teams that communicate well together tend to be more productive, and clear communication starts at the top. Read this online article to see what you, as team leader, can do to facilitate better communication practices.

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# **AT YOUR SERVICE**

Jeff and Terri Wigley are portable sanitation industry veterans, having owned and operated Atlanta-based Pit Stop Sanitation Services for 22 years. Send your questions for them or comments to editor@promonthly.com.



# Tips to Deal With Growing Demand for Sinks and Sanitizer Stands

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

The coronavirus response may permanently change your customers' ordering habits. You need a game plan.

**UESTION:** We are relatively new in the industry and have only seriously entered the hand-wash market as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. We have been purchasing sinks and hand sanitizer stands based on availability, not on a business plan. As conditions have stabilized in our area in terms of demand, what guidance would you suggest in this area of our business?

**ANSWER**: No one was totally prepared for the coronavirus pandemic and the crucial demand for hand-wash stations. As this element of our industry is now a necessity, there are several issues to be considered by most PROs. We suggest your company consider the following:

- 1. Equipment types and supplies
- 2. Increased demand for water
- 3. Customer communication

**EQUIPMENT TYPES AND SUPPLIES** – Evaluate the equipment in your current inventory to meet the demand for hand-washing. The primary equipment types are:

- Stand-alone plastic sinks
- Plastic sinks inside standard portable restrooms
- Stand-alone hand sanitizer stations
- Hand sanitizer dispensers inside portable restrooms
- Metal hot and cold stand-alone sinks with wiring and plumbing
- Trailers with multiple plastic or metal sinks

Excluding hand sanitizers mounted inside of units for the time being, after the hand-wash equipment inventory is complete, evaluate the results. Anticipate future demand for this equipment. Based on budgetary requirements and considering manufacturer backlogs on various equipment types, should you proactively place an order for new hand-wash equipment? Can any of the excess inventory currently in the yard be marketed to existing customers who merely have hand sanitizers inside of their portable restrooms?

As far as hand sanitizer dispensers are concerned, will these be standard equipment in all your rental units? Based on increased demand by the general population, a large inventory of hand sanitizer refill bags is strongly suggested. These refill bags will be needed for portable restroom units, as well as the stand-alone hand sanitizer stations.

With stand-alone sinks, you have the option of a dispenser of foaming soap or a compartment where liquid soap is stored for dispensing through a

If present trends continue, you may want to consider having extra water capacity and less waste capacity in your next new truck. We spoke to one PRO who just ordered 100 gallons more water and 100 gallons less waste on their new 1,200-gallon tank truck.

hand pump. Sinks installed inside portable restrooms require soap dispensers as well. Yet another budgetary- and market-driven consideration: Will sinks inside your units become standard equipment throughout your company or perhaps in just event units? Based on your equipment types and decisions, a sizeable inventory of the appropriate refills is required. Also, be mindful of your paper towel inventory.

Metal hot and cold stand-alone sink stations and sink trailers — while currently not as common — are generally used in the special event market. This equipment also has supply and power requirements that should be inspected and monitored.

A general suggestion is to establish minimum levels of all hand-wash supply items that, once reached, requires immediate restocking. Until demand somewhat subsides, we recommend having larger quantities on hand.

**INCREASED DEMAND FOR WATER –** Stand-alone hand-wash sink stations, as well as sinks inside portable restroom units, require additional water. These requirements should be considered when creating and maintaining service routes. If the volume of extra water is too great and could exceed the capacity of the route service truck, consider running a special route that primarily services stand-alone sinks and equipment that requires water. If present trends continue, you may want to consider having extra water capacity and less waste capacity in your next new truck. We spoke to one PRO who just ordered 100 gallons more water and 100 gallons less waste on their new 1,200-gallon tank truck.

**CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION** – This has always been important in our industry and never more than today. Since the concept of public hand-washing is relatively new to some customers, it is vital they be properly informed.

Among the items to mutually decide upon with your customer:

**EXTRA SUPPLIES –** Do you provide extra paper towels and include this in the rental price, or do you supply when the customer calls? Do you replenish

immediately and make a special trip when the customer calls? Do you replenish within a certain time frame, thus giving you the opportunity to plan and schedule the delivery?

**HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY** – Certain pieces of equipment are not handicapped accessible as currently manufactured, and this needs to be conveyed to the customer as soon as possible. Stand-alone sinks, for example, require a foot pump to dispense the water, and the height of these units are higher than ADA requirements. Modifications can possibly be made to the sink or perhaps a stand-alone hand sanitizer stand — adjusted to the lower ADA height requirements. If the customer is renting an ADA portable restroom, generally used in the special event marketplace, what are the options if hand-washing is required? This may be another instance where wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers could be a standard feature in all your units.

**WINTER WEATHER –** This is extremely important in dealing with customers who have never rented hand-wash equipment until the coronavirus hit. Using stand-alone sinks in freezing temperatures is a major topic of discussion, and this should be addressed well in advance of winter. The sinks can possibly be moved into an inside space, but this area must remain accessible to the route service vehicle. Another option would be to replace the sink rental with a stand-alone hand sanitizer dispensing station. If the sink is located inside the portable restroom, this may help to some extent. Also consider a unit heater that may assist in somewhat colder temperatures.

Regardless of the type of hand-wash equipment, be proactive and have this discussion with your customer.

**NUMBER OF STAND-ALONE SINK STATIONS REQUIRED ON A JOB SITE OR AT AN EVENT** – The answer is dependent on many issues, and communication with the equipment manufacturer is key. With tank sizes of 16 to 45 gallons, from a single sink to several on a trailer, this varies widely depending on the equipment used. As an example, a standard 16-gallon sink will dispense 2 ounces of water per foot pump. Assuming most people use approximately 8 ounces of water to wash their hands, four pumps are needed. The math shows roughly 250 uses are available until the sink is empty. If each person uses a sink after they use a portable restroom, four units would be needed to accommodate 250 uses. However, what if there are hand sanitizer dispensers inside each portable restroom? What if there are larger sinks on site? Again, the answer is to consult your manufacturer and diligently record experiences for use in future situations.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

The coronavirus pandemic has changed our society. The need for proper hand-wash hygiene has brought hand-wash stations to the forefront in our industry. It is extremely important that as PROs, we are educated and up to date about the available equipment and that we accurately and proactively share this information with our customers.





Despite having no background in the portable sanitation industry, David and Nicole Spencer recognized potential in a flagging restroom company and pounced on it

JJJ////

By Pete Litterski | Photos by Kaylinn Gilstrap

avid Spencer had been a homebuilder in the St. Marys, Georgia, area for more than 15 years; and his wife, Nicole, was finding her job as a special education teacher a rewarding fit. They weren't looking for a new opportunity. And they had never considered going into the portable restroom business.

But one day in 2016, David received a letter from a vendor that piqued his interest. The owners of Outback Portable Restroom Services, the local company that handled portable sanitation at Spencer Development Co. building sites, announced plans to close the business and retire.

"They were going to shut the whole thing down," David says. "The letter was very odd to me. I would have expected them to sell the business if they were retiring."

Intrigued, David talked to Nicole about the letter, and they decided to contact the owners to see if they were interested in selling the operation rather than shutting it down. The owners said yes, they had been interested in selling Outback but had not received much interest. That's when the Spencers decided to make an offer.

When they took over on Jan. 1, 2017, with Nicole as the legal owner, Outback was a faltering operation along the Georgia/Florida state line that the former owners had already been scaling back. "When we bought the business, they had 66 units out, but they owned 300," David says. "The units were in generally good shape. That was one of the attractions ... if we grew the business, we wouldn't have to make any new investments for a while."

Nicole says close attention to capital needs and capital costs has helped revive the business. Both Spencers remain committed to their primary careers, but they see their roles with Outback as more than just moonlighting and are determined to make it succeed. They say that with careful hiring and attention to management, they should be able to develop a workforce that can make the arrangement work for them.

The Outback office was moved to the same building that houses David's Spencer Development Co., giving the Outback staff easy access to him and allowing him to keep tabs on the restroom business. The Outback staff



includes a full-time office manager, two full-time route drivers and a part-time yard man/route driver.

When the Spencers bought Outback, it had two route trucks, including one that had outlived its chassis. At first, the workload could be handled with the newer truck, a 2014 Dodge Ram 550 with an 850-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank and Masport pump from Garsite/ Progress. But as the Spencers rebuilt the client list, they needed another route truck and bought a new 2017 Ford F-550, equipping it with the gear from the retired vehicle, an 850-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank and Conde pump (Westmoor) from Garsite/Progress. The company also owns a custom-built vacuum trailer with a Conde pump, as well as a 10-unit custom-built restroom transport trailer.

Although the company had more than enough restrooms in 2016, they have added since then to reach 319 PolyJohn standard units, 10 PolyJohn handicap units, 20 PolyJohn hand-wash stations, six T.S.F. hand-wash stations, four PolyJohn units with sinks and two PolyJohn flushable units. Outback also has 10 PolyJohn high-rise units, used primarily for highway and bridge projects. Deodorizers are from J&J Portable Sanitation Products.

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# EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES THAT IMPACT DAVID AND NICOLE SPENCER OF OUTBACK PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVICES

# **1** TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS DESIGNATION

When the Spencers bought Outback, it was structured with Nicole as the owner. As a woman-owned business, Outback can sometimes realize an advantage when competing for government contracts. The Spencers were reminded of that when they read a column in Portable Restroom Operator about opportunities for woman-owned businesses, and the topic caught their attention at the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show in 2017. That reminder paid off in August 2019 when the company won a contract to provide portable sanitation services for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. The contract calls for servicing 27 restrooms and two existing holding tanks twice a week at the Department of Homeland Security facility. The Outback Portable Restroom Services team includes, from left, Roy Davis, David Spencer, Nicole Spencer, Hailey Arnold, Jason Wainwright and Dylan James. They are shown with a service truck from Garsite/Progress carrying a Conde pump (Westmoor).

2

BACK

# **QUICKLY BUILDING A NETWORK**

Weeks after they assumed ownership of Outback, the Spencers decided to leave the comfort of the winter climate on the Georgia coast and headed north to Indianapolis where they attended the WWETT Show in February. David says although they had plenty of business experience,

> they knew there was much to learn as they set out to rebuild Outback. He says a key attraction was the wide selection of classes offered to the operators attending the show. "The best thing was just to learn about the business, especially in the marketing classes," he says. With their company renting just 20% of its portable restroom units, the Spencers say they wanted to get a jump-start on marketing techniques that would help them breathe life back into Outback.

> David also says they hit the show floor with the goal of learning about products and meeting exhibitors. "Getting to know some of the vendors face-to-face helped," he says. David adds that as the company grows or it equipment ages, it will be helpful to be able to work with vendors he has already met.





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# **3** BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM TO SUCCEED IN A NEW INDUSTRY

With no background in portable sanitation, taking over the business could have been overwhelming, but the former owners agreed to stay on for several months to help ease the transition. Several key employees also stayed on, retaining a good foundation for the company. But soon the former owners moved on to their retirement plans and the experienced employees departed, including a valued route driver who died unexpectedly just as business was

picking up. Because the Spencers have fulltime jobs outside of Outback, they need self-motivated, trustworthy employees. David says one of the key attributes he seeks is applicants who will sincerely enjoy the work. Nicole, who also has experience as an office manager, says she has learned how to build a team and delegate responsibility "so they can take on the challenge."

Nicole points out that not everybody is attracted to a job dealing with sanitation and wastewater, so during interviews, they ask applicants to talk about their comfort level with the work. After all, that was a question the Spencers had to ask themselves as they discussed buying the busi"The best thing [about the WWETT Show] was just to learn about the business, especially in the marketing classes. Getting to know some of the vendors face-to-face helped."

## DAVID SPENCER

ness. And Nicole says they had the right answer: "As soon as we bought it, we just embraced it." They want a team of employees who will feel the same way about the portable restroom business.



#### **MORE INFO**

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J&J Portable Sanitation Products 800-345-3303 www.jjchem.com See ad, page 3 Masport, Inc. 800-228-4510 www.masportpump.com *See ad, page 6* 

PolyJohn 800-292-1305 www.polyjohn.com See ad, page 36 **T.S.F. Company, Inc.** 800-843-9286 www.tuff-jon.com *See ad, page 2* 

Westmoor Ltd. 800-367-0972 www.westmoorltd.com

# **4** WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS TO PREVENT HURRICANE LOSSES

In September 2019, David learned satisfied customers are not only loyal, but they can also be helpful. That was when Hurricane Dorian threatened to sideswipe the Atlantic Coast along northern Florida and Georgia. There was no way David could move several hundred units into the yard or a more protected area, but he wanted to be sure he did all he could to avoid heavy losses. So he got on the phone and found out his construction and industrial clients were happy to take steps to protect the portable restrooms on site.

While some could move the units to protected areas, others parked their own heavy equipment or storage units around the Outback restrooms, anchoring them to the ground to protect them from winds or flooding. As he made his calls, David found the most common request from clients was for early service to make sure units were emptied before the storm in case Outback was prevented from working its regular schedule after it passed. Fortunately for the people along the Florida/Georgia state line, Dorian's track was far enough out to sea that it created few problems in the St. Marys area, but the Spencers were relieved to discover their equipment would be in good hands in the event of a future storm.





Although Nicole did not have any experience in the portable restroom business, she did have a background in advertising and marketing. She decided one way to build her company's special event business was by increasing its visibility in the community. And those efforts went beyond the basics of sponsoring local events or organizations. She points to an early decision to take part in the annual Halloween Scarecrow Stroll in St. Marys. For the event, members of the Downtown Merchants Association set up holiday displays featuring their own take on scarecrows. Families are invited to view the displays and allow their children to go trick-or-treating. Outback staffers have been decorating a portable restroom each year with a popular display that features a skeleton seated inside the unit. Families are encouraged to pose with the skeleton restroom and post photos on social media. Nicole strategically positions a sign for the company so it shows up in all the photos.



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# Where's the Restroom?





# An Unlikely Landmark Draws Thousands of Visitors

YOU MIGHT SEE RUSTY, ABANDONED SILOS AND A BLUE TRASH CONTAINER. OTHERS SEE A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME DESIGNER DESTINATION.

### Jim Kneiszel

onstruction is a constant for the owners of this deceivingly industrial tourist attraction somewhere in America's heartland. Maybe that's why you see a Poly-John PJN3 restroom in this photo.

This might look like a rundown agricultural operation at first glance, but the inveterate hammer swingers behind this capitalist homemaking juggernaut likely have no interest in drying corn in those silos. No, you're not going to pull your John Deere up to this complex and drop off the harvest. Actually, the silos are empty and the owners have yet to decide what to do with them.

Though the facilities you see are not functional, we would hazard a guess that other buildings on this site provide a gold mine of profitability. For instance, you may come here for premium-priced throw pillows, light fixtures or fresh-baked goods. In fact, throngs of people come here daily from across the country in the hope of gaining some home-remodeling advice from the proprietors.

Here are a few additional clues to help you identify this restroom location:

**1.** This is probably the most notable thing to happen in this city since a cult figure commandeered a ranch that went up in flames many years ago.

**2.** There are nearby museums dedicated to law enforcement and a locally invented soft drink.

**3.** A national monument stands nearby containing the fossilized bones of a prehistoric behemoth.

 Families are invited to come and play cornhole or throw a football around on the artificial turf lawn.

**5.** It looks rural, but this destination is surrounded by major U.S. cities in every direction.

To win the contest, name the city and the event venue where this restroom trailer is parked. The winner will be recognized as a geographical whiz on the *Portable Restroom Operator* Facebook page. Send your responses to editor@promonthly.com.

**SEND YOUR MYSTERY PHOTOS!** Do you have an interesting spot where you've been dropping and servicing restrooms? Send photos to editor@promonthly.com. We will credit you for submitting to Where's the Restroom?



The Tex-San Site Services team includes, from left, Andrew McGrew, Brandon Rhea, Mike Hendricks, Charles Smith, Liz Oretega, Roy Baring, Krystal Baring, Ivette Velasco, Carlos Velasco, Daniel Guzman and Jesse Mata. (Photos by Mark Greenberg)

THE **Sky's the limit** 

# The potential is as big as the Lone Star horizon for scrappy startup Tex-San Site Services By Robert Patrick

sk Roy Baring, 38-year-old owner of San Antonio's Tex-San Site Services, how he works to keep his clients happy, and he will invariably rattle off a list of answers such as exceptional service, attention to detail, work with integrity and more. But then drill down a little deeper and ask him for a recent example of how he goes above and beyond to ensure his clients are satisfied.

XP+778

"It was almost 6:30 on the night before Christmas when my phone rang," says the Texas A&M University graduate. It was a client who was calling to leave Baring a message asking to order three more portable restrooms for his site. "When I answered the phone, he was flabbergasted and asked me, 'What the heck are you answering the phone for? It's Christmas Eve!' He apologized, but I told him not to worry: I am always available. And we were able to rush those restrooms to his site the day after Christmas."

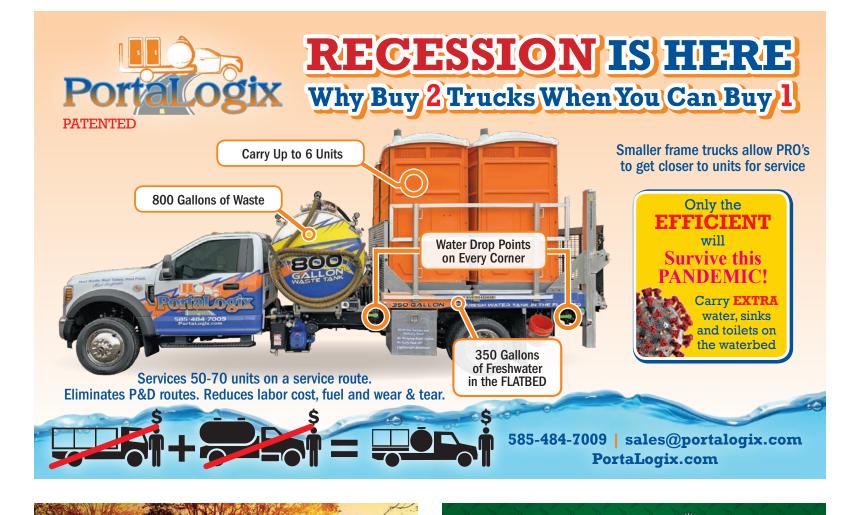
Baring is used to late-night calls. He has long made it a practice to transfer every phone in Tex-San's offices to his own cellphone after sales hours. "I don't want any customer getting a voicemail," he explains. "I give everyone my cellphone number. It's good customer service, but it's also the way I'd like to be treated if I were a customer."

Given Baring's devotion to customer service, perhaps it's no surprise his business has been growing steadily since he began operating in 2014 with 137 Tufway restrooms from Satellite | PolyPortables. Today he has more than 1,500 units from Satellite | PolyPortables and 35 PolyJohn ADA restrooms.

Supplying events, such as the massive River City Rockfest at San Antonio's AT&T Center, accounts for about 10% of Tex-San's business, while residential construction accounts for 55% and commercial construction clocks in at 35%. Business has been growing at a steady pace. Over the last three years, business has increased more than 600%, and Baring recently opened a satellite location that services some 200 restrooms in Austin, about 100 miles north of Tex-San's headquarters.

The Tex-San crew includes drivers Carlos Velasco, Andrew McGrew, Mike Hendricks, Charles Smith, Martin Elizondo, Brandon Rhea and Lawrence Boston. Office personnel, in addition to Baring's wife, Krystal Baring, who serves as chief financial officer, are office managers Ivette Velasco and Liz Oretega.











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#### **GETTING STARTED**

After studying agricultural economics and business in college and graduating in 2003, Baring joined his family's commercial cabinet construction business for a while. He then branched out on his own and worked in corporate sales and management. "Those years in the corporate world convinced me that I wasn't cut out for the corporate life," he admits. "I learned I wanted to run my own show." In 2010, a friend invited him to join in a Texas-based portable restroom rental business that largely served the oil field industry. "I took the advice that to succeed you should never create a plan B. So I didn't. You should just work hard and make sure plan A executes."

**ROY BARING** 

"That was my crash course in servicing portable toilets and running a rental business," Baring says. His "baptism" was a two-week-long event where he learned delivery, placement and how to service the units. However, when the oil fields eventually cut production, business dwindled and rental demand dropped. But Baring was hooked. He saw great potential in Texas' burgeoning commercial and construction industry and decided to start his own portable sanitation company in San Antonio.

He arranged loans with local banks and bought two trucks and the initial restroom inventory. How confident was he that his new business would survive? He explains, "I took the advice that to succeed you should never create a plan B. So I didn't. You should just work hard and make sure plan A executes. And that's what we've been doing ever since we started Tex-San." He pauses, then adds, "Also, I swore to myself I'd never go back to the corporate life. I've been able to keep that promise!" **Left:** Technician Mike Hendricks services a few Satellite | PolyPortables units placed in San Antonio. **Below:** Daniel Guzman fills a bucket with freshwater to clean a bank of restrooms.



Tex-San started out with oil field and construction clients that Baring had known when he was working in the commercial construction industry. "We used these initial clients as a springboard and built from there," Baring says. Word-of-mouth and persistent sales calls helped the fledgling company increase revenues and expand its client list.

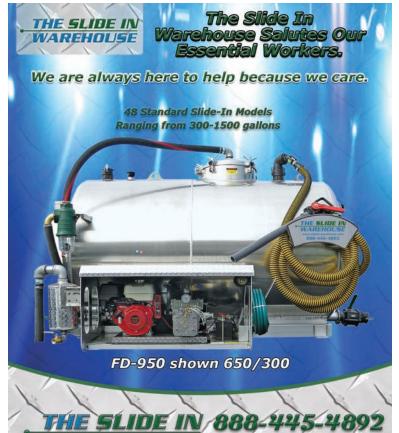
From day one, Krystal Baring handled office management and the books. "Krystal and I have been full partners from the day we started this business, and she's been here through thick and thin," Baring says. "Krystal has been an especially valuable sounding board for new ideas."

She wears many hats. For example, her background in marketing and design helped in creating the company logos and producing promotional materials.

#### **SMART NETWORKING**

After hearing from potential commercial and residential construction clients about recurring problems with their restroom suppliers, such as lax





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billing and poor servicing, Baring saw a great opportunity to concentrate on quality service.

"We heard story after story about suppliers who would merely pull up to a restroom, suck out the waste, throw a chemical in there, toss in some toilet paper, splash some water inside and call it good," he says. Inaccurate billing was another common complaint. "We knew we could do better. We just had to prove ourselves and get the word out."

An extensive program of personal sales calls helped Baring spread the word. First, he would research potential clients to make sure they were offering quality products. "We didn't want to land a contract and be affiliated with a company that was doing substandard work," he says.

Next, Baring scheduled meetings with potential clients. He remembers a competitor visiting him after he'd been in business for a year or so. "He was

# **KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE COMPETITION**

Keeping a close eye on the competition makes good business sense, according to Roy Baring, owner of Tex-San Site Services in San Antonio. "There are many reasons for us to know what our competitors are doing," he says. "If I see that some of them aren't delivering first-class service, it makes me think their customers may be interested in making a change."

And keeping in touch with the competition can also reap benefits in the event one of them decides to sell or closes down their operation. "Being first in line to pick up that business or buy their units is another plus," Baring says.

Lastly, friendly, efficient competitors can make excellent partners when a big event requires more equipment than one operator has on hand. For example, a festival like San Antonio's River City Rockfest may call for more specialized equipment, such as handicapped-accessible units, than Baring has on hand. "I can rent these from a competitor, use them, clean them and return them instead of having to buy them for an event and then seeing them go unused for a while," he says. amazed that I was our firm's only salesperson," Baring says. "He told me he figured I must have a bigger sales crew because of all the business we'd been doing. I told him we keep it tight here!"

Drawing on his sales and marketing background, Baring explains that he is not simply making a sales pitch at these meetings. "I like to say that I am bringing value to a client. It's all about what we are going to do to help them as a customer," he says. "Going into a potential customer's office with the attitude that you are there to help them and make their life easier is the way to reap rewards."

For example, Baring typically explains how keeping a restroom sanitary can help a customer's bottom line. "I tell them that clean restrooms can prevent workers from getting ill and that means less work absences. Also, the cleaner the restrooms are, the less chance they will hear from safety inspectors," he says.

He remembers a sales call where he explained to a potential customer, a homebuilder, how important first impressions were. "If the first thing workers or visitors see on a job site is a filthy portable restroom, that leaves a bad impression and reflects poorly on a contractor," Baring says. "Details matter." The customer seemed to agree: Baring got the contract.

#### **THE CREW COUNTS**

Baring admits it usually takes several meetings to land a big deal. "Many of our contracts started out with partial orders, as if the customer were testing us. I am fully aware that changing a restroom supplier is about 25th on any purchasing manager's to-do list, unless they're having a meltdown. But we've had great success starting out with small, partial conversions and showing how we can offer a first-class, headache-free service." Indeed, he claims that 99% of his new customers eventually let Tex-San supply all their portable restroom needs.

He points to a well-trained crew as a key component to success. He counts hiring and training effective workers as one of his biggest challenges and admits he quickly learned experience counts less than a good attitude.



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"We hired some guys based on their skill levels, but they had already developed bad habits on previous jobs and didn't work out for us," he explains. "Now we hire more for attitude than aptitude." It doesn't hurt that one of his drivers, McGrew, who also screens and trains new applicants, has a degree in psychology. "He's a real bonus in that he knows the qualities someone needs to make it in this business."

To help train new employees and maintain a high level of service, Baring enlisted the help of Las Vegas-based Lightspeed VT, an interactive online training firm, to produce a series of training videos. These include both the right way and wrong way to service a restroom. A short, two-minute video shows a sloppy, superficial cleaning/servicing and a longer version goes into detail on Tex-San's servicing.

"We want our employees to see both sides of the issue," Baring says. Other videos address everything from truck washing and oil changing to yard work. The videos are set up on a web platform and each employee is required to view them and complete quizzes to ensure they've mastered the content. Baring can check online to make sure employees watched them based on their login status.

Baring discovered the training videos also make excellent selling tools. "We quickly realized that education is the way to get more business," he says. "We want potential clients to see what we do differently and how our servicing will help their processes."

"Going into a potential customer's office with the attitude that you are there to help them and make their life easier is the way to reap rewards." He regularly shows the short videos to client purchasing managers and operations executives and sometimes division presidents. The videos are professionally produced and include music and high-speed dubbing. "The videos are a great way to get their attention and help us get our sales message across in an entertaining way," he explains.

#### **OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK**

What's ahead for Tex-San? Baring is ramping up the firm's online

## MORE INFO

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

Garsite/Progress, LLC 800-467-5600 www.progresstank.com

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Pentair Hypro SHURflo 800-445-8360 http://hypro.pentair.com/en

PolyJohn 800-292-1305

www.polyjohn.com *See ad, page 36* 

Satellite | PolyPortables 800-883-1123 www.satelliteindustries.com *See ad, page 10* 

Westmoor Ltd. 800-367-0972 www.westmoorltd.com

presence by incorporating the videos onto its website and investing in advertising on sites and services such as Google. He also recently replaced the company's service trucks with new models.

The company has three 2019 Ford F-350 trucks outfitted with Best Enterprises 400-gallon waste and 200-gallon freshwater slide-in tanks with Conde pumps (Westmoor); a 2012 Ford F-550 with a 900-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater tank from Garsite/Progress with a Masport pump; a 2012 International 4400 with a Best Enterprises 600-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport pump; a 2019 Chevy 5500 with Best Enterprises 600-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater tank and a Masport pump; and two Ford F-350 delivery trucks. All tanks are stainless steel. They have three restroom transport trailers built by Texas Bragg and Liquid Waste Industries.

In addition to the inventory of restrooms, Tex-San has many 250- and 300-gallon PolyJohn holding tanks for use with office trailers and RVs, as well as 30 300-gallon freshwater skid tanks using Pentair Hypro SHURflo water pumps for customers without access to water. It also carries handwash stations from PolyJohn and Satellite | PolyPortables. They use de-

odorizing products from J&J Portable Sanitation Products.

Tex-San recently moved into a new, more spacious headquarters that includes temporary housing for two employees who stay there in case of emergencies. Baring hopes to continue on the growth path he started six years ago. "We have only just started to tap into our capacity," Baring says. "Five years from now, I hope to have 5,000 portable restrooms and to have moved into the septic business. This is a huge opportunity." ■

Left: Mike Hendricks grabs supplies from his truck, an International with a Best Enterprises tank and Masport pump.



ROY BARING

# **INDUSTRY NEWS**

# Hino Trucks presents scholarship to class of 2020 recipient

Hino Trucks announced the recipient of the 2020 Hino Motors Novi Educational Foundation scholarship. This is the second year of a 10-year, \$25,000 program. The winner, Vinaayak Puliyadi, was chosen based on his submission essay about what leadership means to him, as well as extracurricular activities and being admitted to a college or university in the fall. Puliyadi plans to attend Penn State University to study mechanical engineering.

# American Tank completes acquisition of Lely Tank & Waste Solutions

American Tank announced the completion of its acquisition of Lely Tank & Waste Solutions. American Tank retained Lely employees who are leaders with extensive experience in the industry, including Tim Counts, vice president of operations and sales; Bruce Curry, product manager and consultant; and Ricky Paulson, production manager.





Better worksites Better weekends Better world Karleen Kos is executive director of the Portable Sanitation Association International. She may be reached at karleenk@psai.org or 952-854-8300.



# Who Ya Gonna Call When You Need Expert Advice About Portable Sanitation?

## By Karleen Kos

eaders of a certain age will remember the theme song to the original *Ghostbusters* movie released in 1984. It's the kind of thing that gets into your head and sticks there all day. Some of the words go like this:

If there's something weird And it don't look good. Who you gonna call?

If you're seeing things Running through your head. Who can you call?

You may wonder why I bring this up. Well, the Portable Sanitation Association International has not run off any ghosts or seen the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. But I hope portable sanitation operators see us as the answer to "Who ya gonna call?" in our industry. We don't have any proton packs or particle throwers, but we have other ways of helping solve scary problems that affect your ability to do business. Here are some examples:

For several years, operators in a Midwestern state were vexed. Every spring they were not allowed to drive their trucks on county roads due to thawing, while large vehicles such as school buses and milk trucks motored right on by. Portable sanitation companies had to choose between being cited for driving on the roads or letting units go without service for weeks at a time. The PSAI worked with the operators, the Association of County Administrators and elected officials to get the rule changed.

Last summer, a company in the Western U.S. was being told by a large government contractor that the new three-year bid contract would only pay for cleaning portable units once every 90 days. The PSAI was able to help the company educate the government entity so the contract was ultimately offered on terms better aligned with recommended servicing schedules.

When COVID-19 hit, the industry had questions and the PSAI swung into action. Within days, we had created the only portable sanitation-specific guidance available, added a COVID-19 Resource Center to our website and provided members with a weekly live discussion forum for managing the challenges to their companies. We are still constantly updating these resources, and we are in the process of updating all relevant servicing procedures for the new normal.

A company owner called when facilities started reopening this spring. The rules in his state seemed to prevent portable restrooms from being part of the solution that would allow certain businesses to bring their operations back online. The PSAI talked with numerous people at state agencies and negotiated a path for the use of portable sanitation equipment. Then we conducted a three-way live meeting with the operator and the customer to walk them through sanitation options that would allow the customer to reopen.

#### THE VALUE OF AN ASSOCIATION

Nonmembers often say things like "I've been in business for a lot of years. I made it on my own. I don't need the PSAI." Others say things such as "Why should I spend money on that? I can just go on Facebook and get ideas from other operators for free." Well, that's true. But here are some other things that are true.

When you do everything on your own, you're doing it the hard way. You also get what you pay for. A lot of the ideas on Facebook are good. A lot of them are not so good. Do you have the time and money to figure out which are which? And do your friends on Facebook know how to work with the government systems when hard problems come up?

Trade associations exist to help promote their respective industries and solve its problems. If you are not a member of the PSAI, you're cutting yourself off from reliable expertise and system know-how. You are also riding for free on the backs of the companies that fund the organization so we can advocate for the industry. You may think you are smart for doing that. But it seems to me the truly smart people are those who invest about the price of one new portable restroom unit per year in an organization that works for the benefit of everyone in this business.

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By Craig Mandli

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80% alcohol liquid spray is available in the same sizes. It is bulk packed only. **412-789-8683; www.surco.com.** 

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#### WALEX PRODUCTS OVATION

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colors, including fresh/blue, citrus/orange and lavender/purple. To use the disc, tear open the package, remove the disc and pin it or hang it anywhere. If being placed directly in contact with surfaces that can be damaged by fragrance, such as finished wood, polished surfaces and certain plastics, packages should be torn open and the disc left in the package to be placed near the source of foul odors. **800-338-3155; www.walex.com**.

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The **Double Hand Wash Station** from **J&J Portable Sanitation Products** has a lightweight construction with a durable, single-piece outer body and enclosed freshwater tank. It provides a large opening at the foot pump to accommodate work boots, as well as a basin to accommodate forearms. Two paper towel dispensers hold a two-fold paper towel. The molded base prevents wear on tanks while being moved. Convenient fill and evacuation ports make



service easy. It has convenient handholds for easy maneuverability. Both the freshwater and graywater tanks have a 24-gallon capacity and drains. **800-345-3303; www.jjportable.com.** 



#### JAG MOBILE SOLUTIONS SMART SINK TRAILER

The **Smart Sink Trailer** from **JAG Mobile Solutions** provides multiple hand-wash station access styles, as well as no-hands faucet operation. They can have one to 32 hand-wash stations and can be configured to operate in

outside temperatures from 20 degrees below zero to 100 degrees F. They maximize freshwater and wastewater capacity, so each trailer provides up to 7,200 hand-washes between services. Water heater operations include tankless propane, electric tank-type or both to provide hot water up to 140 degrees F in all environments and allow it to be configured for off-grid usage. **800-815-2557; www.jagmobilesolutions.com.** 

#### MCKEE TECHNOLOGIES -EXPLORER TRAILERS HAND-WASH STATION

The hand-wash station from **McKee Technologies** - **Explorer Trailers** is designed as a self-contained unit that allows outdoor event or work site crowds to have easy access to



warm water and soap dispensers. Options include mirrors and lighting. Stainless steel sinks and counters with self-closing, water-saver faucets are simple to maintain, according to the maker. A large polyethylene freshwater tank, paired with a galvanized graywater tank, ensures many uses before discharge and recharge. Setup is easy, and a custom-painted steel chassis with front-locking utility cabinet ensures the unit is aesthetically pleasing while safely containing the water heater and pressure tank. The graywater tank is horizontally mounted inside the chassis with a 2-inch discharge port at the rear. Units are built on a commercial-grade trailer chassis for easy towing and placement. **866-457-5425; www.explorertrailers.com.** 



#### **NUCONCEPTS DELI UTILITY SINK**

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The three-basin deli utility sink from **NUCONCEPTS** is available in 50- and 66-inch sizes. Both are constructed of 16-gauge type 304 stainless steel with a No. 4 finish. They are health and safety certified and have heavy-duty, commercial-grade faucets and sprayers running hot and cold water. They offer strong and spacious

folding sideboards, a soap dispenser, sump pump, water inlet with regulator, lockable cabinet doors, a built-in 1 1/2-inch clean-out and onboard water heaters. **800-334-1065; www.nuconcepts.com.** 

#### **SATELLITE | POLYPORTABLES TAG 4**

The **Tag 4** portable sink from **Satellite** | **PolyPortables** balances the fundamental strengths of the original Tag sink with improved design and functionality to offer a more operator-friendly, free-standing hand-wash station. It holds almost any size soap and towel dispenser on the market while still fitting comfortably in most standard-size portable restrooms for easy transportation. A new locking mechanism, easier suction port and freshwater tank access, plus larger handgrips now on all four sides, make it a convenient, everyday option. It includes stake-down holes on the base of the unit, a sink that opens on the top to allow access to the freshwater tank, a locking freshwater tank with latches that



can be padlocked for added security, a suction port that provides easier access to clean out graywater, and large basins that allow for easy forearm washing. The water capacity is 22 gallons for both tanks. **800-883-1123;** www.satelliteindustries.com.

#### **T BLUSTAR RP-TWIN**



The **RP-Twin** free-standing portable hand-wash station from **T blustar** connects two single RP-Clean sinks back to back on a pedestal with two soap dispensers and two hand towel dispensers. Each sink basin has a capacity of 15 gallons for freshwater and 15 gallons for graywater. The freshwater is filled into the first sink basin and dispensed by a foot pump to both of the faucets. The graywater from both sinks filters into the second hand-wash basin. Both sinks have shelves for cellphones or keys. **404-719-0715; www.tblustar.com.** 

#### T.S.F. TUFF-JON 90-GALLON FREE-STANDING SINK

The **Tuff-Jon** 90-gallon free-standing sink with trash container from **T.S.F.** provides two wash stations; hands-free, foot-operated pumps; towel dispenser; and 10-cup-capacity soap dispenser. A lifting bracket allows for easy positioning in high-rise applications. The lifting bracket has a 1/4-inch wire cable, weighs 30 pounds and is safety orange. The unit is constructed from easy-to-clean polyethylene, with 45-gallon waste and



freshwater capacities, a towel dispenser, trash container, protective skid plate and freshwater drain plug. It weighs 85 pounds. **800-843-9286;** www.tuff-jon.com.

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# WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone differently, but the common denominator is that it has impacted us all. We do our best to plan our production for the year, but no one could have predicted the massive ripple effect the virus would have not just on our industry but globally. We are actively adapting to the current situation and will be pouring the work and resources into our business so we are able to get you the products and supplies you desperately need.

We are a family-owned business just like many of you. Our dream isn't to be the only supplier in the industry; it's to be the best choice for your needs. We will continue to strive to get there. We just ask for you to stay by our side so we can continue to be by yours.

JOHN/alk

For insight into current industry production challenges, read the article Why Lead Times for Portable Sanitation Supplies are So Long Right Now at PROLEADTIMES.COM.



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