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SHOW ISSUE



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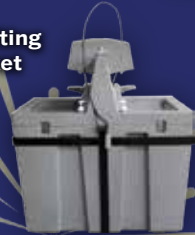
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COVER PHOTO: Former NFL wideout Russell Shepard is tackling a new career in the portable sanitation industry with his Houston-based company, Shep Boys Waste Management. He is shown in the company yard with a 2023 Mack vacuum truck with a Masport pump built out by Amthor International. (Photo by Jon Shapley)

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By Jim Kneiszel

No Business Like WWETT Show Business

It's time to travel to Indy for the biggest annual event for wastewater professionals

I have vivid memories of the first time I attended the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo, what you now know as the WWETT Show. I compare the experience of walking into the exhibit hall to how it felt when my dad took me to a Major League Baseball game for the first time.

If you grew up loving baseball, you know what I'm talking about. You walk down a catwalk into the grandstand and see that perfectly groomed playing field for the first time. The deep green grass, the sharp white chalk lines heading out to those towering yellow foul poles. The players warming up in their bright, clean uniforms. The organ blasting away and the vendors hawking peanuts. You can scarcely take it all in, but at once you realize "this is the way baseball is meant to be played."

That's how it was when I landed in Nashville for the first time and hit the floor of what they simply called "the Pumper Show" so many years ago. All those shiny vacuum trucks parked on what seemed like miles of red carpet. The portable restroom displays from all the manufacturers — every model in every color — and all the service accessories. Thousands of folks in their company-branded-shirts pushing their way into the hall when the doors opened to meet and greet their regular vendors. And I realized that "this is what the wastewater industry is all about."

The WWETT Show can be almost overwhelming. Going back some 20 years, I recall talking to other attendees about the newfound pride they felt for being part of this industry after they came to the show. PROs would take their sons and daughters to see the new technologies and the professionalism shown by all the exhibitors and educators coming from all corners of the world. We newcomers couldn't help but feel good being part of an industry that — let's face it — doesn't always get a lot of respect.

EARLIER DATES

And the WWETT tradition continues again this month, when some 12,000 of our industry friends convene Jan. 24-27 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. The 2024 WWETT Show is a little earlier this year, but besides moving up from past February dates, the schedule is familiar, with Wednesday, Jan. 24, dedicated to education seminars, and then the exhibit hall opening Thursday, Jan. 25, and Friday, Jan. 26, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and the show closing on Saturday, Jan. 27, with doors open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. An estimated 600 exhibitors will show off their products and services.

For many reasons, I think the WWETT Show offers a real shot in the arm for busy PROs who spend 51 weeks a year satisfying demanding customers and sometimes facing scorn for the type of work they do. It's that time of the year when you get to meet up with other business owners who know what you're going through. You are reminded that there is great value in provid-

ing portable sanitation. You also learn new techniques and best business practices that will give you a leg up on the competition back home.

Of course, the main draw is seeing, touching and learning about the latest and greatest tools you use in the portable sanitation industry. The WWETT Show gives you the rare opportunity to compare all the restrooms, all the restroom trailers, and all of the vacuum trucks the industry has to offer in one place. Visiting websites is great, but nothing replaces seeing equipment in person before making a big buying choice.

TAKING NOTES

But don't let this massive display of equipment distract you completely from the vast education opportunities available at the WWETT Show. This year it offers about 90 seminars covering a wide variety of technical topics, marketing tips and human resources issues to help you improve your business. As I do every year, I read through the class offerings and biographies of the speakers and picked out some seminars that may be of interest to you and your crew.

Consider the following:

Transportation and Logistics in Portable Sanitation, *Wednesday, Jan. 24, 10:30 a.m.-noon*

The session offers a how-to for route-running service technicians. It will cover preparing trucks and portable restrooms for transportation and setup in the field, the unique challenges of transporting liquid waste, how to select the best sites for placing restrooms, and identify laws and regulations that apply to waste disposal. The presenter is Jamie Gunderson, a certified trainer and member of the Portable Sanitation Association International Training Committee, as well as an operations manager for Honey Bucket.

Portable Sanitation and Work Sites, *Wednesday, Jan. 24, 1-2:30 p.m.*

PROs will learn ways to grow their skills and confidence serving work site customers. Topics covered will be best practices for a variety of work sites, serving special work sites including federal installations, schools and large retail stores and determining the optimal number and type of restrooms for a variety of work sites. The presenter is Jamie Gunderson, an operations manager for Honey Bucket.

Small Business Administration 101 – Start, Grow, Expand and Recover, *Wednesday, Jan. 24, 1-2:30 p.m.*

Learn how to unlock the vast resources available to small businesses through the SBA. The federal agency helps people start new businesses,

CONTACT US:

PRO strives to serve the portable restroom industry with interesting and helpful stories. We welcome your comments, questions and column suggestions and promise a prompt reply to all reader contacts. Email PRO editor Jim Kneiszel at editor@promonthly.com or call 800-257-7222.

grow existing businesses, expand through exporting and government contracting, and recover in the event of a disaster. Leading the session will be Ronda Crouch, economic development specialist at the SBA and a 32-year veteran in several positions for the agency.

First Steps to Government Contracting, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 3-4 p.m.

The federal government is the world's largest buyer of goods and services. This session helps small business owners learn the steps necessary to become a federal contractor. Attendees will learn about the benefits of federal certifications, how to apply, and hear about the opportunities to market companies to federal agencies. The presenter is Ronda Crouch, economic development specialist for the SBA.

Killer Culture! Create an Environment that Transforms Employees Into Raving Fans of Your Business, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 3-4 p.m.

Learn how to engage employees and improve employee retention through the use of simple tools and programs. The session will explain the difference between "killer culture" and "culture killer," help businesses identify their core values, ensure a sense of dignity and employee connection, and how to keep a positive culture alive. The presenter is Ty Rogers, vice president of sales and marketing for portable sanitation provider Quick Space in Sparks, Nevada.

The 2023 Portable Sanitation Industry Benchmark Report, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 3-4 p.m.

Portable Sanitation industry software provider ServiceCore spent two years surveying portable restroom operators to identify what profitable businesses are doing to succeed. The session will share results of the survey that will include the revenue category that drove most profits, how operators are changing billing practices, supply chain improvements and areas of expected growth in the industry in 2024. The presenter is Jonah Chilton, CEO of ServiceCore.

The main draw is seeing, touching and learning about the latest and greatest tools you use in the portable sanitation industry. The WWETT Show give you the rare opportunity to compare all the restrooms, all the restroom trailers, and all of the vacuum trucks the industry has to offer in one place.

Adding Restroom Trailers to Your Portable or Septic Business and How to Grow It, Thursday, Jan. 25, 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Learn one manufacturer's take on the opportunities available by adding restroom trailers. Topics to be covered include marketing restroom trailers, return on investment for restroom trailers, and the benefits of adding restroom trailers to a PRO's business. The presenter is Adam Ghrist, co-owner of Lang Specialty Trailers.

Training Your Employees Improves Productivity, Morale and Safety, Thursday, Jan. 25, 11 a.m.-noon

Routine training of existing workforce and new hires will help with retention of important information and more effective onboarding. The session will cover the benefits of regular training, including reducing maintenance costs, reduction in equipment downtime, improved production, better employee morale and improved safety awareness. The speaker is Rusty Nezat, director at Houston-based Nezat Training and Consulting.

General Session – Trade Associations in the Wastewater Industry, Thursday, Jan. 25, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

A panel discussion involving representatives of several industry trade associations will cover topics including advocacy, raising industry standards, education and workforce issues. A Q&A session will follow. Panelists include Kim Seipp, of the National Association of Wastewater Technicians; Sheila Joy, executive director at the National Association of Sewer Service Companies; Tom Groves, executive director of the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association; and Veronica Crosier, executive director of the Portable Sanitation Association International.

How SWOT (Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threats) Analysis Helps With Strategic Planning, Friday, Jan. 26, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Attendees will learn the basics of developing a SWOT analysis to find new niches in their sectors. The session will help discover what is working and what isn't for each company, identify with employees the pitfalls companies face, and how to proceed after developing a SWOT plan. The presenter is Bradley Denton, president at Philmont Inc., and a veteran of the portable sanitation industry.

A FINAL THOUGHT

If you are already planning to attend the WWETT Show, I hope you have a fantastic few days away from work and productive time on the exhibit floor and in the classroom. If you haven't yet decided to attend, think about the value the show might have for crew members new to the wastewater industry or your sons and daughters who are just starting to work with you. Like it was for me, going to that first WWETT Show might be an important career motivator for the next generation. ■

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**Employee Buy-In Matters
When a Takeover Includes
a Makeover**

Scott and Lisa Weld, owners of Buck's Sanitary Services in Oregon, knew they faced a challenge when acquiring Royal Flush Environmental Services in 2023. Buck's routing and billing are paperless, and Royal Flush needed to make the jump to digital quickly. Find out how the Welds made the transition work in this online article.

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WINTER MAINTENANCE 101

**Protect Your Team and
Equipment From Seasonal Risks**

Winter is here and as portable restroom operators, you have to take special care of your people and machinery as they venture out in the cold. In this exclusive online article, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers shares its top tips for keeping everyone safe.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

"An expression of gratitude isn't just seasonally appropriate, though. It can also be a smart, strategic investment in the ongoing morale and retention of your top talents ... your seasonal shows of appreciation can echo throughout the months that follow."

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THE GREATEST HITS OF 2023

Don't Fall Behind, Review the Top 10 PRO Stories

It's already a new year, but if you missed out on the best portable sanitation wisdom, industry news and product features of the past year, there's still time to review. The editors of PROMonthly.com have curated some of the most popular articles of 2023 for your perusal in this online roundup.

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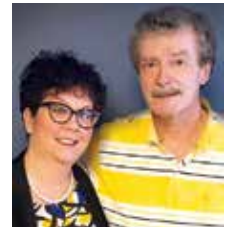


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Jeff and Terri Wigley are portable sanitation industry veterans, having owned and operated Atlanta-based Pit Stop Sanitation Services for 25 years. Send your questions or comments to editor@promonthly.com.

Damage Waivers Preserve Revenue and Improve Equipment Longevity

Use detailed rental agreements to ensure vandalism expenses are covered and customers take better care of your restroom equipment



Jeff and Terri Wigley

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

PROs often overlook the topic of damage waivers. We concentrate on rental, service, disposal, and pickup and delivery pricing. With inflation, our attention is also fixed on fuel costs, cost of equipment, and employee wages and benefits. Damage waivers are a tool with which you can protect both you and your customer from the cost of repair and replacement of parts while your rental equipment is on a job site.

QUESTION: I am not that familiar with damage waivers, and I would like to learn more. Could you provide a general overview of this topic along with suggestions and issues to consider? This may be a policy that our company should adopt.

ANSWER: A rental damage waiver is an optional agreement between the equipment rental company and the customer renting the equipment. If accepted, this agreement limits the customer's financial responsibility for incidental damage to rented equipment, or, depending on the terms of the agreement, the total destruction or theft of the equipment. The most important point, regardless of the limits of damage, is that damage waivers are not an insurance policy. The renter is still responsible, regardless of fault, for all personal injuries, claims, property loss, damage or destruction of property.

WHY OFFER WAIVERS?

Due to a general unfamiliarity of the costs of our products and services, some customers may treat our equipment as inexpensive and expendable. Educating the customer about the value of the portable restroom, hand-wash station, holding tank or restroom trailer, as well as the quality of the service provided, is an excellent way to ensure our equipment is treated with more respect on the job site.

Once familiar with the cost of the rental equipment, the offer of a damage waiver to cover minor repairs or damage is much more appealing to the customer. Some PROs will also list the cost of replacement for the major parts of a unit (toilet seat, urinal, roof, skid, etc.) as well as the cost of a new piece of equipment to show the value of paying a monthly damage waiver fee to avoid these potential charges.

The damage waiver income collected from all customers electing to participate will provide a revenue source that can be designated to handle repairs and possible replacement of equipment. Experience has shown that a large majority of customers pay for the damage waiver, but it is not required during the rental period.

CALCULATE CHARGES

As with all aspects of your operation, you first need to know the cost of doing business. What does it cost to perform a service? This includes vehicle cost and fuel, rental equipment cost, supplies, route driver salary and benefits, disposal charges, administrative support and other overhead charges. These expenses are then divided by the number of services performed and the cost of per service is determined. Hopefully this number is less than the price charged per service! If you have not done this for your company, or if you have not done this in some time, we highly recommend this exercise.

Costs of optional damage waivers vary depending on your market and the degree of coverage you wish to offer. Some PROs offer "minor damage" waivers that cover minor repairs, damage and graffiti, charges can be anywhere from 6% to 10% of the rental charge.

Some PROs go even further with their RDW policies to cover total destruction or theft of the equipment for higher rates. A deductible will be established based on the type of equipment being rented. For example, the damage waiver rate for a portable restroom may include minor damage and a \$150 deductible for the theft or major structural damage of the unit.

Some PROs offer "minor damage" waivers that cover minor repairs, damage, and graffiti, charges can be anywhere from 6% to 10% of the rental charge. Some PROs go even further with their RDW policies to cover total destruction or theft of the equipment for higher rates.

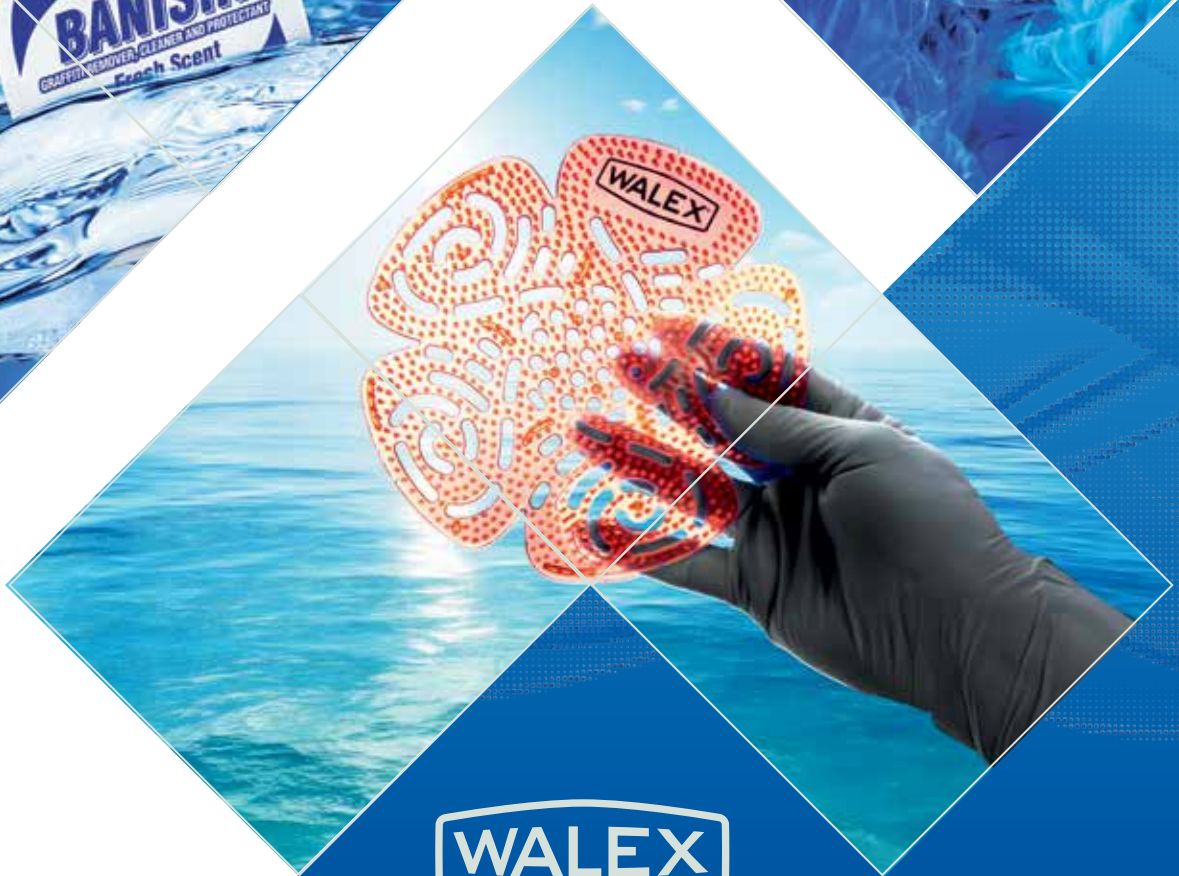
Damage waivers have traditionally applied to restroom units only. However, after COVID and the growing popularity of sinks and hand-wash stations, optional charges now apply to these pieces of equipment as well. With the rapid growth and popularity of restroom, shower and laundry trailers, waivers to cover minor damage are being executed. Some PROs will offer damage waivers for trailers. Due to the cost of these trailers, it is analogous to having minor damage coverage when renting a car.

HOW TO PROCEED

Clearly communicate your optional damage waiver policy to your customer in writing. Whether you choose to offer minor damage coverage only

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Arson left these three restrooms as a pile of melted plastic.

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An unsecured restroom was tipped over on a construction site.

If the damage waiver is rejected by the customer, be clear on your form or letter that (1) the customer agrees to pay for any damage or loss of the equipment regardless of cause or fault and (2) the customer must provide your company with a certificate of insurance.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Damage waivers can be an excellent offering to your customers as well as a benefit to your company. These options clearly show that the equipment being rented is of quality and value and should be treated as such. Further, in working

or a deductible for total replacement of equipment. Whether it is for units only or for all equipment including trailers, be straightforward with your policies.

Offer the damage waiver agreement at the start of the rental period and give the customer the option to accept or reject. It is highly recommended to document their decision in writing.

Discuss the damage waiver agreement with the onsite job superintendent to further clarify the expectations from each party. With the various types of equipment and tools on the job site, supervisors should be keenly aware of the care and responsibility for operating and using rental equipment.

Your terms should include verbiage that the RDW is not an insurance policy as mentioned earlier.

with your customer to offer this coverage, you show you value the customer relationship by protecting them from certain unforeseen expenditures due to damage, vandalism or the terms that you have set forth in your damage waiver program. Offer your customers these options and take pride in the condition of your equipment. ■

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Russell Shepard is shown with his parents, Nikki Shepard, the company's CEO, and Russell Shepard Sr., senior operations manager. Most of the company's restrooms are from Satellite Industries.

Catching Onto a New Career

Former NFL wide receiver Russell Shepard now runs routes of a different kind at Shep Boys Waste Management

STORY: Ken Wysocky | PHOTOS: Jon Shapley



Shep Boys Waste Management LLC
Houston, Texas

OWNERS: Nikki and Russell Shepard Sr., Russell Shepard

FOUNDED: 2020

EMPLOYEES: 14

SPECIALTIES: Portable sanitation

SERVICE AREA: 150-mile radius around Houston

WEBSITE: www.shepboyswaste.com

After playing for seven years as a wide receiver in the National Football League, Russell Shepard called a career audible that just might leave the average person fumbling to understand: He retired to become a portable restroom operator.

But to Shepard, 32, the move was as sensible as calling a pass play on third-and-long. After all, what's not to like about investing in a business with good profit margins and growing demand for its services?

The playbook for Shepard's business — Shep Boys Waste Management, based in Houston — was drawn up a couple years ago as an "exit strategy" from professional football, with his parents, Nikki and Russell Shepard Sr., quarterbacking the company until he was ready to run it.

But the decision to retire was much more abrupt, says Shepard, who was signed as an undrafted free agent by the Philadelphia Eagles in 2013, then went on to play for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Carolina Panthers and the New York Giants.

"I was going to sign with the Baltimore Ravens for the 2020 season, just as my parents were about to get the company up and running," explains Shepard, who played college football at Louisiana State University. "I was

scheduled to head out to Baltimore on a Monday, and the Friday before that I started questioning if I really wanted to keep playing football.

"On Saturday, I decided I didn't want to play anymore and called my agent to tell him I was done," he says. "He asked me, 'You're really going to retire to drive a poop truck?'"

Three weeks later, Shep Boys officially opened for business. Shepard says he drove routes for about a year to fully immerse himself in the business and learn the industry from the ground up.

"I was very eager to learn," Shepard says. "I became totally immersed in the portable toilet space. The rapid growth of the company was the only thing that forced me out of the truck and into the office."

MAKING A PLAY

Shepard already was familiar with the business world, having invested in trucking companies his parents owned and operated, most recently one called Shep Boys Trucking. As his NFL career wound down, he asked a family friend, Jon Farley, a third-party waste broker, for some career guidance.

"I wanted to do something comparable to the companies my parents had run," Shepard says. "Jon told me to think about starting a port-a-potty company, which would be cheaper to start up than other things I was considering.

"He told me people are peeing and pooping every day, so there's always a need for the service," he continues. "It's been a very sound investment — as recession-proof a business as I've seen. I've already been approached twice about selling the company, which tells me we have something really good going on."

Shepard and his parents, who are co-owners of the company, started out with 125 restrooms, one vacuum truck and three employees (the three Shepards). Three years later, the company runs five service vehicles, employs 14 people (including four contract workers at the moment), owns about 700 restrooms — mostly from Satellite Industries — and serves customers within about a 150-mile radius around Houston.

Monthly construction rentals generate about 80% of the company's sales with special-event rentals contributing the remainder, Shepard says.

GROWTH STRATEGIES

To quickly scale up the business, Shepard concentrated on the lowest hanging fruit: monthly construction rentals, particularly for highway projects. Referrals from Farley bolstered the efforts.

"That's where we could obtain the highest profit margins and the best residual income," he says. "We might have 75 cans on one highway project and those units will be there for years."

He also capitalized on another advantage: significant financial resources built up from playing in the NFL.

"It's a very capital-intensive business to start, so it helped that I had the capital to invest in the company," he says.

Several other factors also drove growth. Early on, Shepard says he talked to about 100 reputable portable restroom operators to identify core best practices for success. Providing consistent and dependable service topped the list.

Shepard also decided to not be a low-cost provider in order to gain market share. He looked at the most respected and top-performing service providers in the Houston market to create a template for pricing.

"We want to be a high-end company," he says.

MORE KEYS TO SUCCESS

To minimize overhead, Shepard hired an accounting firm, a mobile mechanic service and a mobile tire-repair service rather than hiring employees to perform those tasks.

Furthermore, he sought to differentiate Shep Boys from competitors by adding extra restroom features such as industrial-strength mirrors and solar-powered lighting and ventilation units from LunarGlo.

"We love them — they're a great marketing piece," he says. "We lose a little bit on the bottom line because they add about another \$100 to the cost of each restroom. But we're trying to create a different experience for our customers — one where people walk into a restroom and love it. That enables us to charge a little more."

"I decided I didn't want to play anymore and called my agent to tell him I was done. He asked me, 'You're really going to retire to drive a poop truck?'"

Russell Shepard



Shep Boys brands water bottles waiting for customers in their Houston office.



Shepard is shown with equipment inventory at Shep Boys Waste Management.



“During every year in the NFL, I developed relationships with owners of teams. I’d ask them about everything from stadium operations and leasing rights to employee benefits and 401(k) retirement plans. ... I essentially received a crash course in business.”

Russell Shepard

Left: Mementos from Russell Shepard’s football career at Louisiana State University and several NFL teams are displayed in his office at Shep Boys.



Shepard inspects restrooms in the Shep Boys Waste Management yard (Satellite Industries).

ISNetworld, an online software platform that allows companies to see what businesses are qualified, in order to minimize potential liabilities.

“Anyone with a score of 2 or higher is a no-go,” Shepard says. “You have to score a one.”

Sometimes the training is done at the Shep Boys shop and other times it’s done at a specific plant. Some courses last up to a week and employees have to pass a test at the end of the training.

The training is expensive. But it’s money well spent if it helps the company acquire lucrative restroom-rental contracts. Some refineries, for example, have hundreds of restrooms on site, he says.

EQUIPMENT INVESTMENT

To service restrooms, the company relies on: a 2019 Ford F-750 with a 1,400-gallon waste/600-gallons freshwater aluminum tanks from Amthor International; a 2020 Ford F-550 with an 800-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater aluminum tank from Amthor; a 2023 Mack MD6 truck with a 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater aluminum tank built by Amthor; a 2023 Mack MD6 chassis with a 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater aluminum tank built by American Tank Co.; and a trailer that carries an 800-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater tank from Amthor. The trucks and the trailer are equipped with Masport pumps. A Ford F-250 dually pickup truck tows the trailer.

“We thought the tanker would be good for emergencies if something ever happened to a truck,” Shepard notes. “But over time, as we earned more business, we’ve built a full route around it.”

The company also owns roughly 700 restrooms, mostly new units from Satellite Industries, plus a mix of quality used restrooms; 100 hand-wash stations from Satellite; two restroom trailers made by Satellite Suites; and about 50 holding tanks and 25 water tanks for construction trailers, also from Satellite.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

Listening to Shepard talk business, it’s easy to assume he earned a business degree. But he didn’t. Instead, he soaked up information and strategies

The company also uses deodorant disks from Walex Products Co., with scents such as coconut, cinnamon and strawberry.

“People are really surprised at how good our restrooms smell,” Shepard reports.

To attract and retain quality employees, the company offers quarterly job reviews and a technician rating system that incentivizes good performance, he says.

“We give them gifts like good seats to a Houston Rockets basketball game or a weekend stay at a nice hotel in Houston,” Shepard explains. “We also award cash bonuses at the end of the year, based on the job reviews. And those bonuses get bigger as employees build up time and experience with the company.”

WORKING SAFER

The company also provides extensive safety training required to work at refineries and chemical plants, which Shepard would like to add to the company’s customer base.

“We tell companies we’d like to work for them and they tell us what training we need,” he explains.

Safety training is important for working in refineries and other plants because companies have to submit health, safety and financial records to

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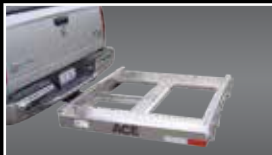
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while in the NFL and relied on portable sanitation industry mentors to increase his business acumen.

“During every year in the NFL, I developed relationships with owners of teams,” he explains. “I’d ask them about everything from stadium operations and leasing rights to employee benefits and 401(k) retirement plans.

“I love to ask questions and learn,” Shepard adds. “I essentially received a crash course in business.”

Two industry mentors also helped him devise effective business strategies: Doug Card, the owner of Smooth Move Services, a Houston-based portable restroom rental company, and its parent company, Houston Waste Services; and Reagan Swinbank, a partner in Sprint Waste Services (bought by GFL Environmental in 2022).

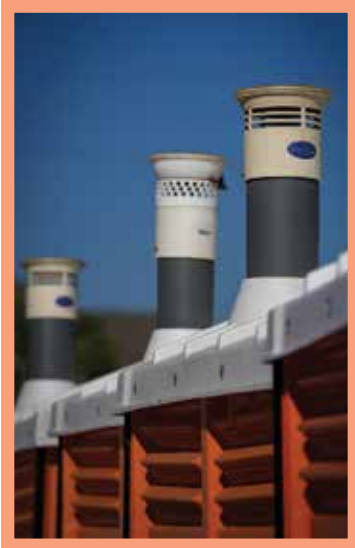
“Doug told me to not disrupt the market by being a price low-baller — that only hurts everyone in the long run,” Shepard says. “He said I should instead be confident in our services and charge accordingly. He also gave me advice on everything from routing systems to how to operate and run a successful portable restroom company.

“Reagan taught me not to chase every portable restroom rental,” he continues. “Instead, he told me to chase margins — enter the market for disaster work with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and the American Red Cross.

“They’ve both helped me create a 5- to 10-year vision for growth,” Shepard concludes. “Without mentors, you’re just walking in blind.”

EAGER FOR GROWTH

Looking to the future, Shepard remains offensive minded, with long-term plans to gain more work at refineries and petrochemical plants as well as contracts with FEMA to provide restrooms during natural disasters and other emergencies, Shepard says.



Shep Boys uses LunarVent solar exhaust fans (LunarGlo) to pull odors from restroom holding tanks stationed in the Texas heat.

“Scared money doesn’t make any money, in my mind,” he says, noting the company’s aggressive growth plans. “We want to be a regional company that serves all the states along the Gulf Coast from south Texas to Tampa, including Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, plus Georgia.

“We can make the same amount of revenue with 500 restrooms at industrial plants as 3,000 restrooms on construction sites,” Shepard says while explaining why the company wants more industrial work.

To enhance those growth plans, the company has been granted state and federal certifications as a women’s business enterprise, a disadvantaged business enterprise and a minority business enterprise.

“Those certifications are huge for us because they allow us to compete with the big companies,” Shepard

says. “There aren’t enough minority-owned companies to hire, so oftentimes we’re asked to bid on contracts.”

Whatever happens, it’s clear that Shepard is relying on a thoughtful, carefully considered and strategic game plan, not a desperate Hail Mary heaving toward the goal line. And he’s certain he will succeed.

▶ RUNNING EFFICIENT ROUTES

Former NFL wide receiver Russell Shepard learned an important lesson while driving customer routes during his first year running a portable sanitation business: Routes efficiency matters. A lot.

So after Houston-based Shep Boys Waste Management grew to the point where it was on firm business footing, he opted to subscribe to ServiceCore, a route-optimization software program designed for septic tank pumpers and portable sanitation companies.

“Bad routing hurts your bottom line and your customer service,” he says.

But the ServiceCore software does more than just boost route efficiency. It also can manage inventory, provide automated customer billing, create a detailed customer database where technicians can post notes and photos, book and schedule jobs and send turn-by-turn driving directions to technicians. It even monitors technicians’ progress on jobs in real time.

Some of the benefits include a convenient mobile app for technicians; elimination of paperwork and time-consuming phone calls between dispatchers and technicians; reduced fuel costs, vehicle wear and tear and overtime pay; better cash flow through faster invoicing; and more efficient operations through improved inventory tracking.

“Before, it was hectic trying to route everything efficiently,” says Shepard. “And it also helps us better monitor the returnables that we have out in the field.

Continued efficiency is a must if Shep Boys expects to compete in a Houston market packed with portable restroom operators — about 30 in all, Shepard estimates.

“Houston is undergoing massive population growth and we think we’ll keep trending with that growth,” he says. “But we have to keep maximizing our efficiency.”

Overall, Shepard says ServiceCore provides a great return on investment.

“There’s no way we could manage without this kind of technology,” he says. “It helps us tame ‘the beast’ — that’s what I call overhead.

“When coupled with hiring the right people, these technologies make the beast easier to tame.”

“We’re going to be one of those companies with 10,000 or 20,000 restrooms someday,” he says. “I have all the confidence in the world in what we’re building.

“I’m a competitor and I’ll do whatever I have to do to win.” ■

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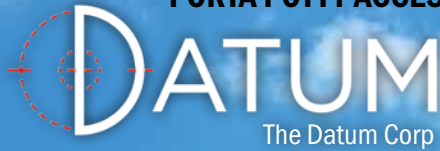
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BUSINESS INCUBATOR

Our **Business Incubator** feature follows the progress of brand new PROs trying to make their mark in the portable sanitation industry. If you are new to the business or know someone who is, write to us at editor@promonthly.com and tell us about it.



Keep on Rolling

Small events, plantation weddings and commercial customers with upscale preferences create a growing niche for Royal Restrooms of Louisiana

STORY: Dee Goerge | PHOTOS: Jeff and Meggan Haller

Toby and Rhonda Breland started Royal Restrooms of Louisiana as a sidelight to another successful business but it soon grew into another robust enterprise. Toby Breland is shown with a Forest River restroom trailer set up at a special event organized by Stalecracker, a popular YouTube foodie.

Toby and Rhonda Breland figured portable restroom trailers would be a nice little sideline to go along with their other construction-related businesses. But within 15 months of starting their portable sanitation operation in February 2022, they realized they had another thriving business on their hands. The entrepreneurs' connections, personal involvement and passion to be part of their community have set Royal Restrooms of Louisiana on a path to success.

Toby has been part of the grocery industry for 20 years, most recently as a commercial general contractor in grocery and retail from Texas to Florida. The Brelands also have equipment rental and property management businesses. Through networking, they became interested in portable restrooms. After some research the couple and their business partner, Nicholas Burkett, decided to become part of a franchise instead of starting their business from scratch.

"I wanted support with marketing and media. I'm process-focused and when there's a step I can't work through, I want someone there for help. It fit my personality," Breland says of his decision to franchise through Royal Restrooms.

The Brelands saw a need for upscale restroom trailers in their region and purchased Forest River units. The trailers have hands-free flushing porcelain toilets, running water, mirrors with vanities, indoor and outdoor lighting, and air conditioning. The Brelands often deliver and service the trailers themselves. "My wife and I always enjoy interaction with clients," Breland says.

"We're taking that extra step and use nontoxic cleaners and provide fresh flowers that match their colors. We'll provide attendants — usually my wife and me."

Toby Breland

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Thanks to ties with their construction business, their first contracted restroom rentals included an employee celebration of the opening of a grocery's corporate office and a nonprofit event. People who attended posted photos and glowing comments about the company and its service on Facebook and other social media.

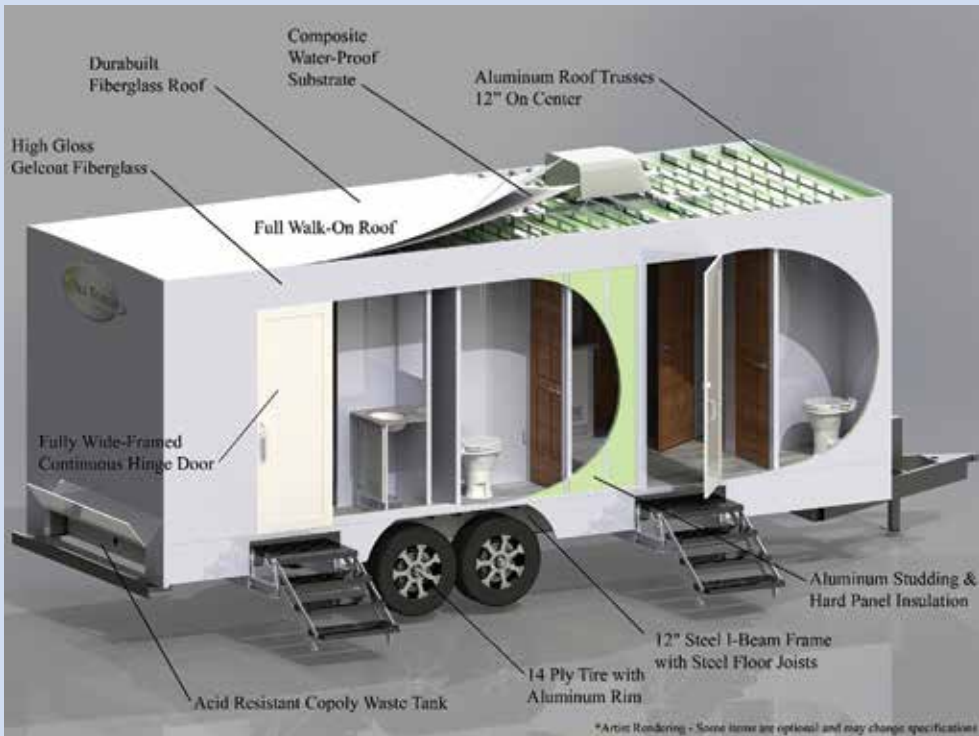
"That got the word out," Breland says, to corporate offices as well as individuals holding private events such as weddings and reunions.

The Brelands make sure customers have a good experience. When possible, they personally set up and go through the trailer with clients.

"We're taking that extra step to use nontoxic cleaners and provide fresh flowers that match their colors. We'll provide attendants — usually my wife

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and me,” Breland explains, noting clients appreciate that the owners often do the work themselves.

They continue to add exposure through social media that targets a 100-mile radius around New Orleans, though they have traveled well beyond that.

About 70% of Royal Restrooms rentals are for private events. Plantation weddings are popular, for example, and the Brelands can provide a generator and freshwater tanks when needed. The trailers are also popular at the many food gatherings and parties Louisiana is known for. Art festivals and the New Orleans Bourbon Festival have also been clients. The remaining 30% of business is for corporate events, oil refineries, chemical companies and commercial remodeling projects that need temporary restrooms.

THE FLEET

The Brelands have purchased five units and plan to consistently add more as demand increases.

The Forest River trailers — two-stall, three-stall and four-stall restroom trailers — and a two-stall shower trailer, are all in a platinum color. An Airy Transit-branded sink trailer with eight touchless sinks and hot and cold water was designed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The trailer includes two 43-inch smart TVs to customize and livestream everything from information about sponsors and promoters to football games through Wi-Fi.

The Brelands also have three portable Lavex Janitorial hand-wash stations. Everything is transported with two 2020 Ford pickups, an F-150 and an F-250.

Customers can see photos of the trailers and request quotes online to begin the process. When an agreement/deposit is made, the Brelands track the trailer on a whiteboard so it’s not double-booked. The scheduled dates include a sanitized cleaning the day before delivery. Other details are also noted, such as stocking fresh flowers for restrooms and clean robes for the showers.

“As an add-on service we offer attendants to work four-, six- or eight-hour shifts. Someone is dressed professionally and cleans the restroom every 15 to 30 minutes,” Breland says. He and Rhonda often provide that service themselves, but during busy times — mostly in the fall and spring when it’s common to have all the trailers out on a weekend — they hire workers from their construction business to deliver, set up, etc.

“We do not have a pump truck currently but have plans to add to our fleet. We are currently partnered with a third party service that pumps our units within a 60-mile radius from our location,” Breland says.

HOMETOWN HELPERS

Beyond special treatment for paying customers, the Brelands are committed to helping people where they live. “We do in-kind donations for church and nonprofit events, for mission work and after hurricanes and just ask that they spread the word about us,” Breland says. *(continued)*

The business isn’t big enough to contract with FEMA for restrooms for disaster relief, but they do their part.

“For me it’s about community involvement,” Breland says. “I may be delivering restrooms, but I’m also cutting logs off the road with my chainsaw and hauling water and sandwiches. It’s who we are. We live here and we’re part of it.”

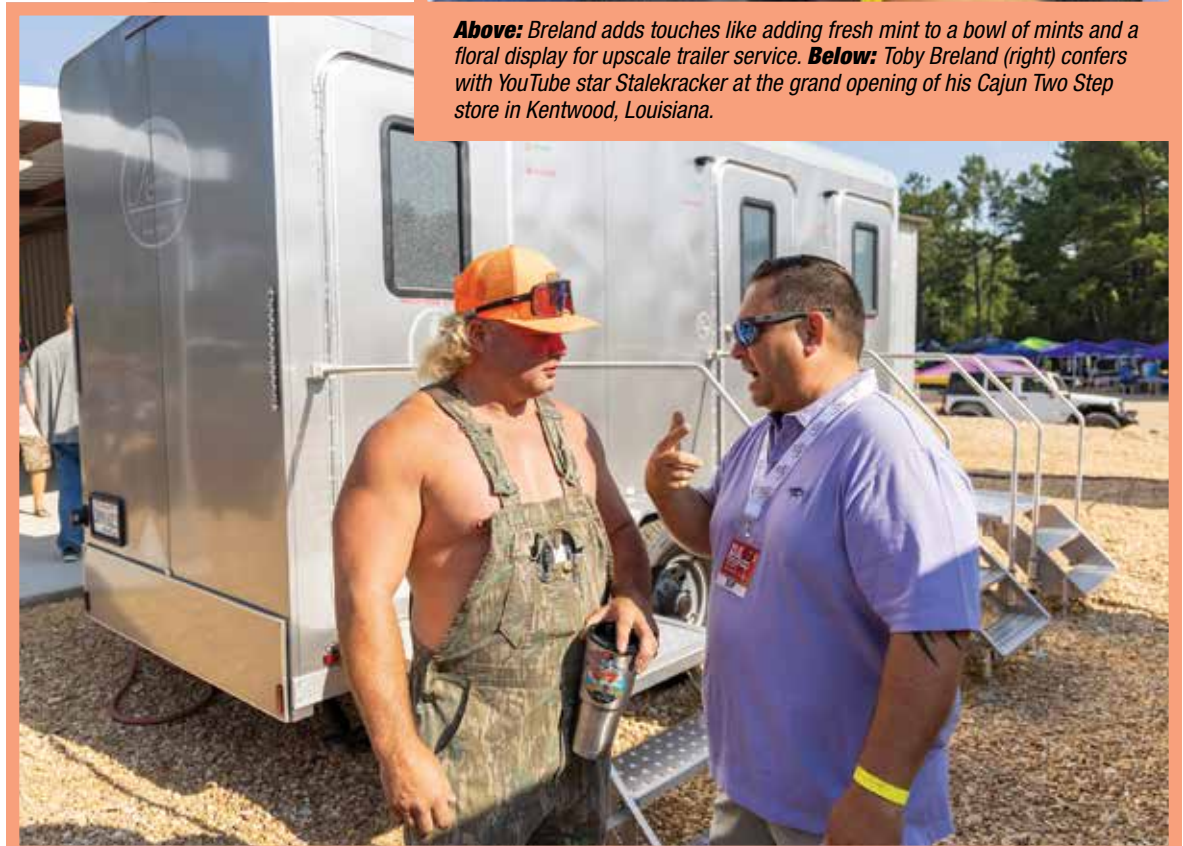
He recalls losing three vehicles and not having electrical power for 26 days when Hurricane Ida hit in 2021, so he has a personal understanding of what people are going through.

THAT’S MONEY, DUDE!

The couple enjoys the people and fun of many events they serve. For example, they were thrilled to be part of the grand opening last summer of



Above: Breland adds touches like adding fresh mint to a bowl of mints and a floral display for upscale trailer service. **Below:** Toby Breland (right) confers with YouTube star Stalecracker at the grand opening of his Cajun Two Step store in Kentwood, Louisiana.





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Toby Breland pauses to greet guests during his service at the grand opening of the Cajun Two Step store in Kentwood, Louisiana.

“For me it’s about community involvement. I may be delivering restrooms, but I’m also cutting logs off the road with my chainsaw and hauling water and sandwiches. It’s who we are. We live here and we’re part of it.”

Toby Breland



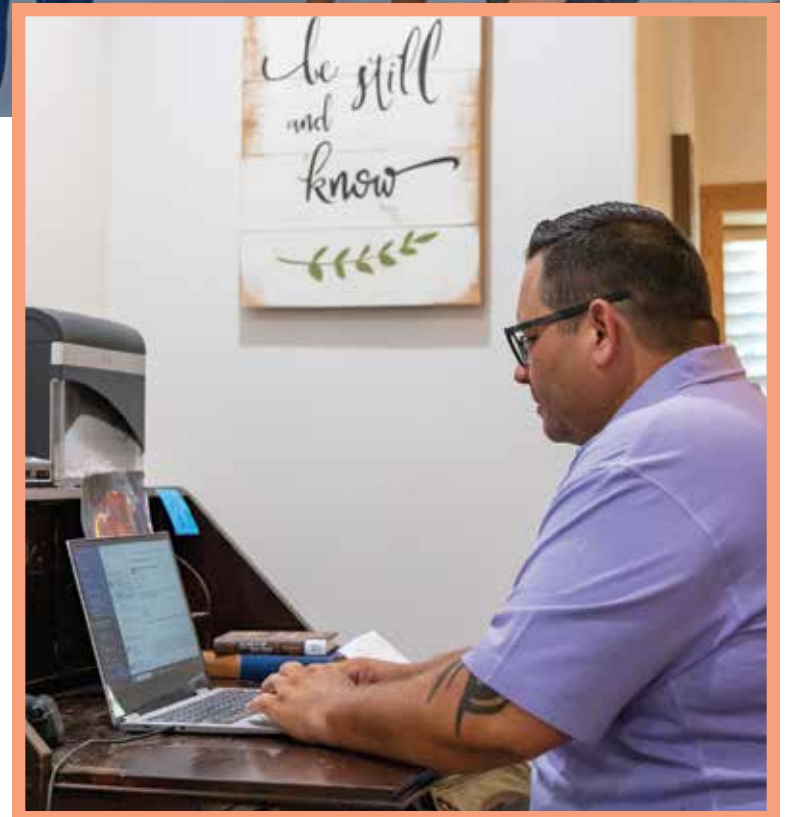
A caricature of YouTube personality Stalecracker is in the background as Breland works his event.

the Cajun Two Step store in Kentwood, Louisiana, for owner “Stalecracker,” a popular YouTube foodie. The Brelands were asked for a bid because they live in the same area.

Knowing the value of getting their name out at the event, the Brelands donated part of the value of providing three restroom trailers and three hand-washing stations.

Breland set up the units the day before the event. He and a helper served as attendants from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. during the event. With more than 60 teams competing in a crawfish cookoff and more than 3,000 in attendance, it was a busy day, Breland says. Fortunately, he was able to hook the trailers into city water and power.

“It was a great networking opportunity and I met social media influencers with large presences on YouTube and they were interested in our units. When we looked at comments, one said that the ‘restrooms were top drawer and the janitor on site was fantastic,’” Breland says with a laugh, adding he is proud of that. It fits with the business’ slogan — a regal portable restroom experience.



Back at the office, Breland keeps up with customer contact before heading out to a special event job.

ON THE GROW

Breland says he is pleased with how the business has grown in less than two years. With a busy fall, a large wedding, and potential spring festivals, Breland plans to purchase more trailers as they become available.

“I’d like to grow to 18 trailers in the next two years,” he says. “I want to tap into larger festivals and Mardi Gras events.” ■

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Jennie Lyon

Clever Videos Can Jump-Start Your Restroom Marketing Message

Post fun short-form videos on social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube to reach potential customers

By Jennie Lyon

Short-form videos have taken the digital marketing world by storm in recent years. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube have paved the way for you to captivate your audience with bite-sized content that's both engaging and memorable. These videos allow portable restroom operators to convey their brand messages quickly and effectively while leveraging the power of visual storytelling.

Why should you incorporate these videos into your strategy to reach construction and event customers? That's simple. First, it's all about the numbers. TikTok alone boasts over a billion active users worldwide, while Instagram Reels is gaining immense traction among younger audiences. These platforms have created ideal channels for brands to reach their target audience.

Secondly, short videos grab attention. I like to scroll TikTok to unwind after work. But I have to be careful; it can be really easy to get sucked into these short videos, and the next thing you know, an hour is gone. In a world where people are constantly bombarded with information and distractions, capturing someone's interest within seconds is crucial. Short-form video content delivers concise messages in visually appealing and engaging ways.

Creating accurate ICAs, or Ideal Client Avatars, for short-form video content is a powerful way to connect with your audience on a deeper level. These ICAs are fictional representations of your ideal customers based on research and data. The ICA helps you understand your target audience's demographics, motivations, challenges and aspirations. By developing detailed ICAs, you gain insights into what makes your audience tick and can create video content that speaks directly to their interests.

Personalization is key. By crafting videos that address your audience's specific concerns or provide solutions to specific problems, you establish yourself as a trusted authority in their eyes.

FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

Where should you start? When it comes to selecting a short-form video platform, it's crucial to start with an overview of the popular options available. Each platform brings unique features and a user base. TikTok, for instance, has gained immense popularity among Gen Z users (but the other demographics are growing quickly). On the other hand, Instagram Reels appeals to a broader demographic due to its integration within the Instagram app.

Consider factors such as your desired audience's age group, interests and behavior patterns. For example, TikTok might be the perfect fit if you're targeting younger demographics who enjoy quick entertainment and trends. However, if your target audience comprises professionals or older individuals looking for informative content, YouTube Shorts could be more appropriate.

The key to creating impactful short-form videos lies in harnessing the power of storytelling. Just like any other form of content creation, storytelling allows you to connect with your audience on an emotional level. Whether it's through humor, inspiration or relatability, a well-crafted narrative can draw viewers in and keep them engaged throughout the video.

Capturing your audience's attention within the first few seconds is crucial. A strong hook or an intriguing visual can make all the difference between someone scrolling past your video and stopping to watch it. Consider using bold visuals, unexpected twists or posing thought-provoking questions right at the beginning to entice viewers to keep watching.

Creativity and authenticity are also vital elements when crafting engaging short-form video content. Authenticity builds trust with your audience. Be genuine in expressing yourself as viewers appreciate transparency and realness. Don't be afraid to share behind-the-scenes footage or showcase moments that reflect who you are as a creator or brand.

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By mapping out your content in advance, you can ensure a consistent flow of engaging videos without scrambling for ideas at the last minute. This not only reduces stress but also allows you to focus on other important aspects of your business.

PRODUCTION VALUES

Creating concise and impactful videos that deliver your message is crucial. To achieve this, start by outlining key themes or topics for each video. This will help maintain consistency in terms of branding and messaging across all your videos. Next, determine a realistic frequency for uploading new videos based on your available resources.

Balancing promotional and value-driven content is another critical aspect when creating a successful content calendar. While promoting products or services is necessary for business growth, bombarding viewers with constant sales pitches can be off-putting. Instead, strive to provide value through informative or entertaining videos that genuinely benefit your audience. I like the 80/20 rule: 80% pure value with 20% promotional content.

(continued)



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Creating high-quality videos requires creativity, the right equipment and tools. From cameras to editing software, having the right gear can make all the difference in producing professional-looking videos that leave a lasting impression. But don't let proper equipment stop you from starting. Even if all you have right now is your phone, that's fine. Start by planning your shots and simple storyboarding your videos to ensure a smooth flow from beginning to end. Experiment with different angles, perspectives and lighting techniques to add visual interest.

Don't underestimate the power of calls to action in short-form videos. Whether it's encouraging viewers to follow you on social media or visit your website for more information, strategically placing CTAs can help drive engagement and conversions.

It is important to pay attention to the readability of the text. Using legible fonts and appropriate font sizes is crucial, allowing users to consume information effortlessly. Moreover, keeping paragraphs short and utilizing bullet points or subheadings can make the content more scannable, enabling users to quickly find what they are looking for.

Another aspect that shouldn't be overlooked when optimizing for mobile viewing is incorporating captions and subtitles into your content. These elements not only make videos accessible to those with hearing impairments but also cater to users who prefer watching videos without sound or in noisy environments. Providing captions and subtitles enhances the overall user experience and ensures that your message reaches a wider audience.

PLACING VIDEOS

One of the most cost-effective ways to promote your short-form videos is by leveraging your existing social media channels. With platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn at your disposal, you have a ready-made audience. You can share snippets or

teasers of your videos and direct viewers to the full video on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo.

Consider paid advertising as well. Platforms like Google Ads and social media advertising offer targeting options that allow you to reach specific demographics based on interests, location, age group and more. By strategically promoting your videos in front of relevant audiences, you can increase visibility and drive traffic back to your website or landing page.

Creating and sharing videos is not enough. To truly measure the success of your short-form video campaigns, it is essential to track key metrics to provide valuable insights into their performance. By analyzing how many people view your content, you can identify potential areas for improvement. Tracking engagement metrics such as likes, comments and shares can help you understand how well your videos resonate with your target audience.

A FINAL THOUGHT

From showcasing products and services to telling compelling stories, short-form videos provide a unique opportunity to convey messages concisely and visually appealingly. They have the ability to entertain, inform and inspire viewers within seconds. ■

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Slide-in tank packages offer convenience for service technicians

By Tim Dobbins

Slide-in vacuum tank systems provide a great option for those looking to keep their pumping outfit small. **Slide In Queen** has a range of products designed to keep PROs equipped without needing extra certifications.

The **Model FD-995-2C-SE** is flanged and dished and according to the company, well-designed for rough-duty service. “The 995 model offers a small footprint without needing a tanker endorsement for operation,” says Jessica Villareal, president of Slide In Queen.

The model is available in both a single- or dual-compartment configurations, but Villareal says PROs tend to gravitate toward the dual-compartment model. “We sell more of the 2C model as most are using them to service larger portable restroom routes,” she says. “This tank can service between 45-55 toilets on a route.”

The tank is made from 5454-H32 marine-grade aluminum and built with 670-gallon waste/325-gallon freshwater capacities. The unit also features a 9 hp, electric-start side-mounted gas engine allowing ease of startup and the ability to carry restrooms behind the tank. “It also opens up the convenience of reachability for all engine components which are located directly behind the driver side door,” Villareal says.

Stock models are built standard with Masport HXL-3 vacuum pumps capable of 115 cfm and Shurflo 12-volt water pumps producing 6 gpm. Users will find a 2-inch diameter and 30-foot-long Tigertail suction hose as well as a 1/2-inch-by-50-foot washdown hose with spray nozzle. Also included are dual 5-inch sight eyes in the waste tank compartment. For discharge, PROs will find a 3-inch full-port ball valve, with male camlock and dust cap.

“This tank can be placed on a 19,500 GVWR with a 10-foot flatbed,” Villareal says. “It is a mount-and-go tank with the versatility of a smaller truck/tank footprint to service hard-to-reach routes.”

Size and versatility are user touchpoints. “My favorite comment from a customer is, ‘I can pump toilets in minutes and still fit in the drive-through line,’” Villareal says. “These tanks fit our customers’ lives and businesses because they can be customized if necessary to fit what they are looking for.”

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