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May 2024
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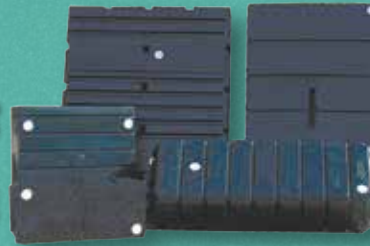
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Former nurse Brooke Reed lands her first restroom trailer with hopes of building a successful boutique portable sanitation business.

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COVER PHOTO: Former nurse Brooke Reed envisioned a way to improve portable sanitation service, and started Picture Perfect Potty Company with her husband, Nathen, in 2022. The couple is shown with a custom restroom trailer from Comforts of Home Services. (Photo by Denny Medley)

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By Jim Kneiszal

Think 'Evergreen' When Populating Social Media and Your Website

Follow these tips to create content that will stand the test of time — and continually educate customers looking for portable sanitation service

As I sit at my desk in late winter and prepare my column for the May issue of *PRO*, I'm thinking about the major work at hand for portable sanitation contractors this time of year.

By now, you've attended the off-season industry trade shows to browse new equipment and collect some continuing education credits. You and the crew have inspected the restroom inventory and made necessary repairs so they're ready to hit the road when the busy season begins. If you're lucky, winter maintenance is complete for your fleet of trucks. Maybe you've even worked in a vacation to a warm climate to recharge the batteries.

So now, what else to get done before Memorial Day rolls around, signaling the torrent of service work for the summer? Just as I was pondering a few more slow-season tasks for PROs, an interesting idea crossed my desktop from marketing expert Jennie Lyon, of Jennie Lyon Virtual Assistant Services.

Lyon's specialty is helping businesses develop and promote their brand through social media, content creation, email marketing website management. In this instance, she talked about creating "evergreen content" businesses can share to help educate their customers.

TIMELESS AND HELPFUL

Working in the media, I understand the term, but for those not familiar, Lyon describes evergreen content as, "Timeless advice your audience always looks for. ... Think of a tree that stays green all year around — always relevant, regardless of the seasons. It's the kind of stuff your audience returns to, finding value today, tomorrow and even years from now."

Whether it's written website material, brief social media videos or Instagram photo posts, evergreen content should reinforce your company's brand messaging surrounding things like quality service, professionalism and customer responsiveness. It should also offer insights about how portable sanitation can best serve the clients that hire you. And the key with evergreen is that it always remains valuable as the months and years fly by.

"Evergreen content is like the foundation of your digital presence — the articles, videos and guides that stay relevant long after being shared. It's the FAQ section that answers common questions and the case studies that show timeless success," Lyon says.

Maybe you already post some evergreen content. Maybe you see other companies employ this strategy to fill out their websites with useful information and continue with regular social media posting week after week. It takes some time to build up this content, and writing and making personal videos may seem a daunting task — more challenging, perhaps, than all of those other off-season jobs you are accustomed to performing.

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 Kneiszal at editor@promonthly.com or call 800-257-7222.

TO-DO LIST

If the prospect of creating evergreen content is more mystifying than, say, rebuilding the brakes on a vacuum truck, I'll suggest a few basic ideas to get the creative juices flowing. Work with your crew to knock out a few ideas on this list right now, and then add more as time allows:

Explain the restroom calculator

You've seen helpful restroom calculator graphics posted by many PROs outlining how many units are needed based on the number of attendees and duration of an event. If you don't already have this tool on your website or posted occasionally on social media, it's time to do it. But consider going beyond simply posting the graphic and create a story or video that goes into greater detail and covers factors that might tweak the formula to give clients a better estimate of their equipment needs.

Steps to an effective restroom order

Assume prospective customers don't understand the process of hiring a portable sanitation contractor. Create a blog or a video that breaks down the steps of ordering a restroom, covering customer needs, extent of service, billing procedures, delivery and pickup of the units. Review all aspects of your invoice so the costs, methods of payment and timelines are well-understood.

Illustrate a service call from start to finish

Shoot a video of a service technician stopping at both a construction site and special event. Show the process in detail, from pulling up in the vacuum truck and unraveling the suction hose to scrubbing the restroom, replenishing paper products and drying the clean unit for the next user. Make sure the technician is uniformed and clean, wearing all the appropriate safety gear and following all applicable OSHA regulations. This video will help customers understand the value proposition of hiring your company to provide safe and clean restrooms for employees or guests.

Use of add-on products to make users happy

The COVID pandemic raised awareness of ways customers could upgrade units with sinks and hand sanitizers to enhance safety for users. But there remains much room to promote other optional features that will improve the user experience and grow your revenue. Like adding sprinkles to an ice cream cone, use social media posts, blogs and videos to promote add-ons like solar lighting, mirrors and custom signage or upgraded from a basic to event-type or ADA unit.

(continued)



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Best construction site placement tips

Strategic placement of units on construction sites requires cooperation — a give-and-take approach — to satisfy the needs of your customer and your service technician. Use photos to illustrate how to keep units out of the equipment traffic flow and to avoid the frustrating blocking of restroom access when your technician arrives to provide service. You want to put the units where they can be easily used by busy construction crews but where users will stay out of harm's way from moving machinery and overhead risks.

What happens to the waste?

Your customers may have no idea about the challenges of safely disposing of waste. Once the truck pulls away from a service, it's out of sight, out of mind for them. But explaining your disposal process will help customers better understand the cost of your service and provide a positive environmental message — that their waste is being responsibly managed. Through words or video, follow a full vacuum truck to the treatment plant and show how the waste is measured, metered and tested as it enters the receiving station. This way you can explain the costs and worker time necessary to finish the job started with the service call.

How to move restrooms on the site

Sometimes customers may need to move a unit on their own — to follow workers on a construction site or to adjust to crowd needs at a special event. Explain when moving a unit is practical and when the customer needs to call you to pump the holding tank first. For minor adjustments in the field, use photos or a video to show how to safely move a unit using grab handles or a forklift.

Handling overuse of a unit

When a unit is overflowing, it needs to come out of service immediately to protect the reputation of both your customer and your service company. Outline how you want customers to lock down a restroom and contact you immediately to handle the situation. Show the difference between clean and usable units and messes that must be addressed. Always follow up by explaining what caused the overuse and how it can be prevented in the future with additional restrooms or more frequent service.

Explaining your disposal process will help customers better understand the cost of your service and provide a positive environmental message — that their waste is being responsibly managed.

Stop vandalism or tipovers

Customers often have no concept of the cost in time and dollars involved in fighting vandalism and tipovers. Share stories of the damage your technicians have encountered and how it is managed. Give tips for how customers can work with you to avoid this frustrating and growing problem. This will be helpful to state your case if and when you need to hold customers responsible for this damage.

Damage waivers explained

If you utilize damage waivers, it would be a good idea to provide a step-by-step review of the waiver document and its advantages for customers. Who pays for damaged units can be a sore point in a customer relationship and details of damage waivers can be misunderstood. So a FAQ entry, blog or a video on the topic can head off problems in the future.

Restroom trailers vs. plastic units

More and more, customers are seeking options for portable sanitation service. While tried-and-true traditional restrooms remain a go-to product in many cases, restroom trailers are a growing choice, especially for small backyard parties and business remodeling projects. While many service providers now offer trailers, few promote them adequately. Post case studies showing where these VIP units are chosen for weddings and commercial uses. Showing the features found in these upscale units or sharing testimonials from happy users will go a long way to growing future bookings.

FINAL WORD

These are just a few ways PROs can create evergreen content that will educate, raise brand awareness and build revenue moving forward. If you want to get into more detail with Jennie, visit her website, jennielyon.com. There is one final message from Lyon that is important to repeat. And that is even though this content is designed to be "evergreen," that doesn't mean it will never need updating.

"Go back to your old stuff and cut out any outdated info or ideas," she says. "Keep an eye on what's new in your industry. Update your content with the latest stats, recent stories and what's trending. By blending your timeless ideas with fresh updates, you make content that stays helpful." ■



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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.

Your Compensation Package Might Just Surprise Your Crew



Jeff and Terri Wigley

Don't just talk salary during employee reviews or when recruiting new workers. Add up all of your company benefits and wow them with that number.

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

QUESTION: As owners of our company, my husband and I would like to convey to our employees that they are valuable to our company in that they earn more than just their hourly wage or salary. What suggestions do you have?

ANSWER: In today's current economic environment, recruiting and retaining employees is vital for PROs. Benefits are an important part of employee compensation and, as owners and managers, you need to constantly explore the many benefit options available for companies of your size. You then select the benefits most valuable to your employees, while financially affordable for your company. Just as important, once these benefits are selected and implemented, you effectively communicate these programs to your employees on a continuing basis.

We will discuss several benefit options and then suggest an effective way to communicate this to your team.

LEGALLY MANDATED BENEFITS

All companies are legally obligated to offer the following:

Social Security and Medicare – 7.65% as mandated by the federal government. The employer pays 7.65% and the employee pays 7.65%.

Workers' compensation insurance – This rate is based on the company's "experience mod" — a measure used by insurance companies to frequency and severity of incidents and claims on an ongoing basis. The employer pays this amount in its entirety.

Unemployment insurance – Each state has its own method of calculating this amount and, again, the employer pays this amount in full each year.

Paychex.com reported that a study from June 2022 conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that the median cost to businesses of private sector employees was \$2.93 for every hour worked. The estimate for year-end 2023 was \$3.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS YOUR COMPANY CAN OFFER

Potential employees value benefits in their job selection process and even more importantly, retaining employees is dependent on a strong benefits package. As an incentive to reward and to promote long-term employees, benefits that increase over time are amazingly effective.

Here are the most common benefits offered by PROs:

Health Benefits – Paychex.com provides the many options available to employers in the most concise fashion:

- Group health insurance plans – This is the most common program whereby the employer contracts with an insurance provider for cover-

age. The employer decides if premiums will be paid entirely by the company, or if the employee will be responsible for some portion through payroll deduction. This is commonly done as a pretax deduction, which is another benefit. Often this benefit is only offered after a certain period of employment. Additionally, long-term employees may be rewarded with either lower premiums or additional coverage after company-established work experience periods.

- Health savings account – Employees have access to pretax funds that can be used for qualified medical expenses. An HSA allows both employees and employers to use untaxed funds to pay for deductibles and copayments for medical expenses. This can lower out-of-pocket expenses for preventive health care services. In addition to insurance companies, HSAs are offered by banks, credit unions and other financial institutions.
- Dental and vision coverage – These health options go beyond the standard major medical coverage by most insurance plans and can be a valuable addition to your company's benefits package. Some PROs will offer these coverages after a certain period of work experience to incent employees to strive to achieve long-term service with the company.

Financial Benefits

- Retirement accounts, i.e. 401(k)s and SIMPLE IRA Plans – These plans are beneficial to the employee in that they offer pretax contributions to a retirement account, often with an employer match up to a certain percentage. These programs demonstrate and encourage the company's willingness to reward long-term employment.
- Annual pay raises – Annual performance reviews are vital in establishing and maintaining communication between management and employees. Employees should be aware and comfortable with the fact that there is a direct relationship between performance and pay.
- Life insurance – Plans can be offered through the company where the employee can enjoy lower rates as opposed to shopping for policies themselves on the open market.

Work Benefits

- Uniforms – Comfort and safety for the employee that works in the yard and in the field while also projecting professionalism for the company. If affordable for your company, this benefit is worth the investment.

Family Needs Benefits

- Flexible work schedule – PROs can demonstrate their commitment to employees by offering flexible work schedules that can accommodate family and personal obligations.

- Work at home day(s) – The COVID pandemic led to the development of technology and business practices to allow for working away from the office. Now, in certain situations, working from home is not out of the question.

Benefits from company membership in other organizations

Become familiar with organizations and associations with which your company is a member, such as local chambers of commerce, builders' associations and rental organizations. Many of these groups may offer benefits that your employees may find attractive. An excellent example is the Portable Sanitation Association International where company membership entitles employees and eligible family members to participate in the PSAI Scholarship Program. Scholarships are available for college, university or trade school educations.

Outside training and seminars

Financial planning and budgeting are the most useful and common topics, especially when an employee is nearing retirement.

- External opportunity – schedule or attend an after-hours seminar or presentation with a speaker and encourage both employees and family members to attend. The company could pay the fee, if any.
- Internal session – invite a speaker to attend and present at a company meeting.

Creative fringe benefits

- Gift cards for rewards such as positive customer feedback.
- Employee suggestion program – encourage innovation and improvement by rewarding ideas that are implemented.
- Birthday celebrations – A monthly company-wide meal for everyone celebrating a birthday that month shows appreciation and builds company morale.
- Paid volunteer day(s) – We have heard of companies that will support an employee spending a day volunteering for a cause or an event that they personally support. This benefit is yet another way that the PRO shows support for the employee outside of the work environment.

SHARE WITH THE TEAM

After investigating various ideas, analyzing the cost of numerous benefits programs, soliciting employee input and interest, you may also want to consider employing the services of a human resource consultant. These professionals can evaluate your proposed programs while also suggesting other ideas based on new emerging trends. Please keep in mind that this should be an active, ongoing plan.

Once the benefits plan is in place, create an employee benefits statement that adds the appropriate costs of the various plans to the employee's current salary. The legally mandated benefits and, if offered, health insurance, 401(k)s, retirement accounts and uniforms have exact costs while flexible work schedules, gift cards, birthday celebrations and the like build morale and camaraderie. List all these benefits below the salary amount and the total compensation to the employee will be significantly higher than their standard paycheck.

Present the benefits statement during annual employee reviews.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Working for a company is more than a paycheck. Employees are the company's most valuable asset. Establishing – and promoting – the value of a benefits program will go a long way in retaining current employees while also aiding in the recruitment of the best new job candidates. Strongly consider the employee benefits statement idea to illustrate the true value of working for your company. ■

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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.



Brooke and Nathen Reed of Picture Perfect Potty Company.

Start Small, Dream Big

Former nurse Brooke Reed lands her first restroom trailer with hopes of building a successful boutique portable sanitation business

By Jackie Holbrook | PHOTOS: Denny Medley

Margaritas have likely inspired more bad ideas than good ones, but for Brooke Reed, the tequila helped spark a business plan.

In September 2022, Reed and a friend were discussing potential restroom solutions for a river property the Reeds live at on the outskirts of St. Louis, Missouri. They've struggled to find a company willing to dig a well at their off-grid retreat in the Ozarks due to its remote location and granite-laden soil. Venting about the problem, a potential solution came to mind.

"What we need is a camper that is just a bathroom and a shower," Reed recalls saying. "We should build one. We should make it cute like a tiny home." Her next thought was that if the bathroom on wheels were cute, people would want to rent it for weddings and outdoor events.

Reed woke up the next morning, excited about this potential business. She and her husband Nathen Reed always dreamed of being entrepreneurs. With full-time jobs and three children, the timing was never right. Plus, Reed, a third-generation health care professional, loved her job in the nursing industry. That was until the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, Reed worked with patients in a COVID ICU unit and in overflow tents. She contracted COVID in August 2020. She suffers from long-term complications. Illness and burnout led her to quit her career of 20 years.

Reed wasn't sure of her next step. With all three of her children now grown, starting a business seemed like a possibility for the first time. However, she

didn't have an industry in mind. Operating a portable restroom trailer was the first idea that stuck. She began looking into the market and putting together a business plan.

CHOOSING A TRAILER

The couple wanted to see restroom trailer options in person before making a purchase. Ultimately, they decided to purchase a trailer from Comforts of Home in Aurora, Illinois.

Comforts of Home custom-built a restroom trailer 15 feet long and 8 feet wide. The Reeds requested a double-axle to more easily take it to rural venues. "We wanted a beefy underside and they were able to do that for us," Reed says.

The trailer has a 450-gallon wastewater tank and a 225-gallon freshwater capacity tank. The trailer has five restroom stations. The women's side has two private stalls and a sink with a touchless faucet. The men's side has a sink, two urinals separated by a partition and a private stall. A 2018 Chevy Silverado crew cab pickup pulls the trailer.

Comforts of Home finished Reed's trailer in February 2023 and she picked it up in March.

PICTURE PERFECT

Reed's idea wasn't just to own a portable restroom trailer, it was about creating one that was "picture perfect."



“I dove into it from a female perspective which is what our business model is too. Men don’t care about cute bathrooms that are stylish and well-designed.”

Brooke Reed

“It’s the Picture Perfect Potty Company so that it could be in the background of the pictures no matter what kind of event you are having or what your décor is like or what the setting is. It’s going to fit in,” Reed says.

Reed selected from the Comforts of Home flooring options and used one of the company’s vanities. She went bargain-hunting for many of the finishes, shopping for deals on Amazon, Wayfair, Overstock and Home Depot. She purchased items like door and cabinet knobs, sconces and mirrors before sending them to Comforts of Home to install. She worked with a designer to create a white and black-themed vinyl wrap for the exterior.

“I dove into it from a female perspective which is what our business model is too,” Reed says. “Men don’t care about cute bathrooms that are stylish and well-designed.”

GROWING PAINS

Picture Perfect Potty Company served its first clients in June 2023 at two outdoor events. Reed was just getting up and running when she experienced a major setback: Google removed her website from its search engine. While she’s never received an explanation from Google, she believes it was because of several positive reviews.

“I wish I knew why,” Reed says. “I think there was a flood of five-star reviews and I think Google thought it was a scam or fraud, and so they shut it down.”

Reed filed a report with Google Business, which is done through artificial intelligence. She had to wait an



Above: The restroom trailer from Comforts of Home Services is set up and ready to serve an event. **Below:** Reed decorates the interior of her restroom trailer.



entire month for the initial report to expire before filing another one. That report eventually resolved the problem and the company’s website returned to Google’s search engine. In the meantime, she put her business on Bing, Yelp and Nextdoor in an effort to generate business.

OBSERVATIONS

Surprises: The Picture Perfect Potty Company is back on Google’s search engine. However, the positive reviews never returned. Reed installed QR codes in the trailer to make it easy for users to leave a review. She used the program Flowcode. She’s surprised by the lack of follow-through. “It’s hard to get people to leave reviews. I get a lot of scans on the QR code in the bathroom. People scan it all the time but they don’t complete the task,” Reed says.



A sign inside the Picture Perfect Potty trailer invites users to scan a QR code to leave feedback or contact the company by phone or email.



“It’s the Picture Perfect Potty Company so that it could be in the background of the pictures no matter what kind of event you are having or what your décor is like or what the setting is. It’s going to fit in.”

Brooke Reed

What Would She Do Different?

Despite the challenges she faced on Google, she still believes it’s her most valuable marketing tool. For example, she bought booth space at a couple of wedding shows, but they didn’t generate any leads. “If I had to do it all over again I think I’d put all my money into Google advertising,” Reed says. “This is not a product that you are going to convince someone that they need to buy. I’m not selling a sweater. When they need a bathroom, they are going to Google it.”



Urinals with a divider on the men’s side provide some privacy while allowing lines to move more quickly.



An interior view of the Comforts of Home Services restroom the Reeds had customized to their preferences.

Advice: Reed believes the portable restroom industry is only going to grow. “I feel like post-pandemic we are going to see a change in the way that outdoor sanitation at events is handled,” she says. Reed encourages other women to get involved in the industry. She says women are often the ones making the decisions about outdoor events like weddings and parties. “You just have to commit and go for it because you won’t have any idea until you do,” Reed says. “But once you commit and go for it, the sky is the limit because women can bring a totally different perspective.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Picture Perfect Potty Company is set to grow. Reed is pricing a second, smaller restroom trailer. The company dumps the wastewater at campgrounds and truck stops. However, once the company has three trailers, Reed plans to purchase a piece of property for trailer storage and to create an on-site dump station with a concrete holding tank that would be pumped out. Reed’s husband still works full time as a lineman for the local power company. Most of the company’s events are on the weekends, so he’s able to help drop off and set up the trailer. Reed says as the company grows she may have to consider hiring additional help.

In less than a year, Reed took an idea and turned it into a successful business. Despite a few learning curves, she’s excited about the potential for a picture-perfect future. ■

FEATURED PRODUCTS FROM:

Comforts of Home Services, Inc.
630-906-8002
www.cohsi.com



Clever gender identification graphics were designed to direct and amuse restroom users.

Best Thing About It: Entrepreneurship suits Reed. She enjoys the learning curve. From website optimization tricks to writing a business plan, she’s learned the majority of her business from scratch. She credits her nursing background for giving her the skills. “Nursing is a jack of all trades, [master] of none,” Reed says. “I have to know enough about everything to keep it going and then if something becomes critical, I need to call in a specialist.”

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‘Sky’s The Limit’

Rodriguez Portables owner David Rodriguez, right, is shown with team members Gustavo Torres, center, and Sergio Ramirez, left. The company carries restrooms from Satellite Industries and PolyJohn.

California’s David Rodriguez piggybacked portable sanitation onto a successful farm labor business — and the site services opportunities just keep on coming

STORY: Ken Wysocky | PHOTOS: Fred Greaves



Rodriguez Portables Inc.
Oroville, California

OWNER: David Rodriguez
FOUNDED: 2020
EMPLOYEES: 7
SERVICES: Portable restroom rentals and service
SERVICE AREA: 100-mile radius around Oroville
WEBSITE: www.rodriguezportables.com

As a farm labor contractor in California for more than a decade, David Rodriguez never planned on becoming a portable restroom operator.

But dissatisfied with the service provided by local portable sanitation companies he hired to clean restrooms for his agricultural workers, Rodriguez started doing it himself. And thanks to a serendipitous twist of fate, he now owns and operates Rodriguez Portables, based in Oroville in north-central California.

In just three years, the company has grown to include more than 600 restrooms and five vacuum trucks. The business also has expanded into supplying fencing and barricades as well as water tanks for mobile construction offices, recreational vehicles and the like.

“I never intended to start a restroom business,” says the 32-year-old entrepreneur. “But it has worked out so well that I wish I would’ve started doing it much sooner.”

Rodriguez’s story underscores the importance of taking calculated risks to capitalize on business opportunities when they arise, as well as responding to customers’ needs, which helps drive service offerings and builds customer loyalty by providing them with one-stop shopping.

“Everything in our business came about through customer demands,” says Rodriguez. “Initially, it required big up-front investments. But in the long run, they’ve all been worthwhile.”

The company now obtains about 90% of its sales from monthly rentals, with construction-site rentals generating approximately 65% of that revenue and agricultural rentals chipping in the balance, he says.

TIRED OF WAITING

The seeds for the business were planted around 2019, when Rodriguez — who was tired of dealing with portable restroom operators who rarely showed up as promised — decided to clean the restrooms himself. At the time, he owned about 20 restrooms from PolyJohn, mounted on two-unit trailers.

As a farm-labor contractor, Rodriguez recruits and manages laborers farmers hire for seasonal work that includes planting, cultivating, pruning and harvesting a variety of crops at farms and orchards. He’s required to supply portable restrooms and drinking water for the laborers — sometimes as many as 80 to 100 employees per season.

"If the restrooms aren't cleaned often enough, I'm subject to fines because technically it's my job site," he explains. "I never got fined, but I often had to explain [to regulators] that the companies we hired to clean the restrooms were running late.

"It was a big concern for us because the fines can be hefty."

To alleviate that headache, Rodriguez bought a used vacuum truck for \$500: a 1987 Ford F-350 dually equipped with a 500-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater tank and built out by the previous owner.

After the owner of the truck showed Rodriguez how to clean a restroom, he was on his way to self-servicing his restrooms.

SEIZE THE DAY

Then fate intervened in July 2020. Rodriguez's employees were pruning vineyards when the property owner, who owned a large construction firm, saw the restrooms. He asked Rodriguez if he was interested in providing 100 restrooms and 50 two-unit trailers for disaster cleanup work in the wake of the so-called Dixie forest fire.

The massive Dixie fire — the largest in state history — burned for 3 1/2 months and torched 963,309 acres of Northern California before it was contained.

Rodriguez explained that he didn't run a restroom rental company. But the insistent contractor said it would be a great business to get into. Other companies weren't interested in the project, the contractor told Rodriguez, because it would involve servicing the restrooms twice a week at sites about two hours north of Oroville, in mountainous terrain with heavy snowfall in winter.

"He said I should name a price," he says. "Then he made me an offer I couldn't refuse and that's how I got into the restroom business. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Because of the pandemic, buying 50 trailers and getting them delivered quickly was almost impossible. So the contractor gave Rodriguez a month to build 20 trailers for starters.

"So our welder and another employee and I started working 12- and 14-hour days, Monday through Saturday, with one guy cutting materials, one guy welding and one guy painting," he says. "I don't know how we did it, but we did."

"We were on that job for two years, sending two trucks up there

"The mobile trailers are our bread and butter. Each one is equipped with a GPS unit from Verizon Connect so we know where each trailer is located. That way our drivers don't have to call supervisors and superintendents to find out where the units are."

David Rodriguez



Torres preps a dual-restroom trailered unit Rodriguez Portables uses to serve agricultural clients. The trailer can be moved easily by customers and carries a GPS device to track location.



Ramirez washes down the interior of a restroom.

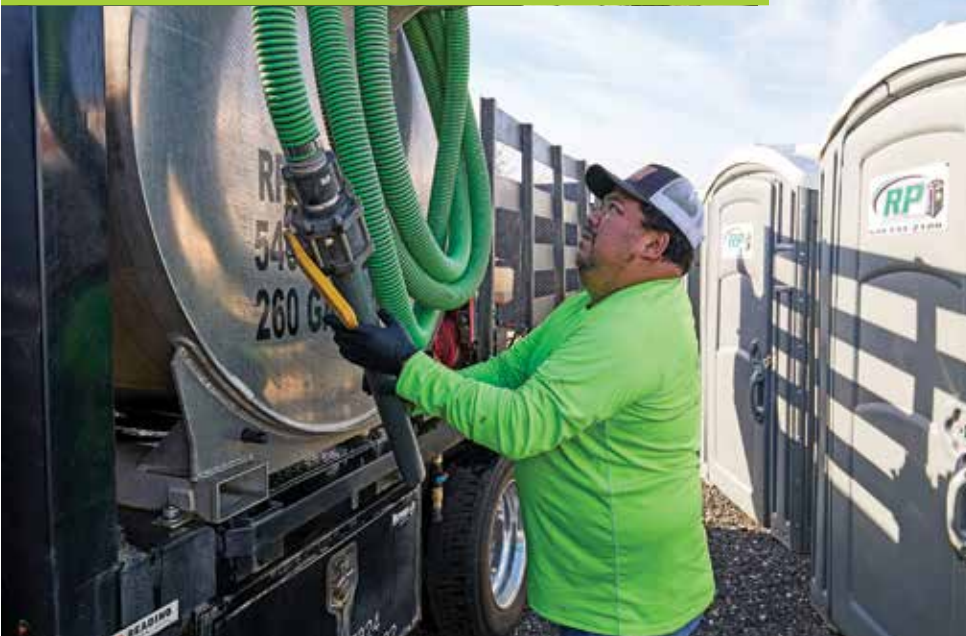
“Mariana is just as determined and dedicated to grow the business as I am. We don’t plan on hitting the brakes any time soon. It’s a great business.”

David Rodriguez



Sergio Ramirez services restrooms in the company yard.

David Rodriguez is shown with a row of agricultural units the company fabricated for use in the fields. They have built 150 of these trailers, about 80 two-unit models and 70 single-unit models.



Gustavo Torres returns hoses to a service truck while running a route. The truck was built out by FMI Truck Sales & Service and utilizes a Masport pump.

twice a week to service restrooms at about 10 of what they called ‘lay-down yards,’” Rodriguez continues. “And that led to a lot more work because the contractor was recommending us to everyone he knew, so it was hard to say no.”

BUILDING INVENTORY

The roster of equipment grew quickly. Today the company owns five vacuum trucks, all equipped with slide-in aluminum tanks and Masport vacuum pumps: a 2020 and a 2022 Ford F-250, each equipped with a 350-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater tank from FMI Truck Sales & Service; a 2023 Ford F-350 with a 540-gallon waste/260-gallon freshwater tank from FMI; a 2022 Chevrolet 5500 with a 540-gallon waste/260-gallon freshwater tank from FMI; and a 2019 Chevrolet 6500 with a 1,500-gallon tank built by Custom Tank Fabrication and used for pumping out septic tanks and holding tanks.

“At the time, the pandemic made it hard to get vacuum trucks quickly, but slide-in units were easier to get,” Rodriguez explains.

The company also has invested in about 600 restrooms from Satellite Industries; roughly 150 hand-wash stations from PolyJohn; and two self-fabricated luxury restroom trailers. In addition, it also owns about 150 self-fabricated trailers – around 80 two-unit trailers and 70 one-unit models.

“The mobile trailers are our bread and butter,” Rodriguez says. “Each one is equipped with a GPS unit from Verizon Connect so we know where each trailer is located. That way our drivers don’t have to call supervisors and superintendents to find out where the units are.

“Contractors love that we know exactly where our restrooms are located.”

ADDING SERVICES

As the business diversified, it also bought about 10,000 linear feet of 12-foot-long, 6-foot-tall fence panels from ZND US; 100 aluminum barricades from ZND US; approximately 15 500-gallon water tanks for temporary office trailers and RVs; and about 50 250-gallon holding tanks from Satellite.

(continued)

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▶ SMALL-TRUCK STRATEGY



In the office, Rodriguez is flanked by office manager Nou Vang, left, and his wife, Mariana Rodriguez, right.

“One of our customers asked if we have fencing,” Rodriguez says, explaining how the ancillary rental products came about. “I said, ‘We don’t — but we’ll get some.’”

The company started renting water storage and holding tanks in 2023 for the same reason: clients kept asking.

“I’ve learned to never say no,” he says.

How could Rodriguez afford to invest in that much equipment in such a short amount of time? He used revenue from his labor-contracting business, he says.

“If not for our farming operation, we wouldn’t have been able to grow that fast,” he explains. “We used revenue from that business to buy trucks and restrooms and build the two-unit trailers.

“We invested a lot of money into equipment, but we got it all back.”

EYEING MORE GROWTH

Looking back, Rodriguez still marvels at how a chance meeting with a contractor led him to build a successful business. He also says his wife, Mariana, plays an instrumental role in the company’s prosperity.

“She is a big, big part of the business,” he says. “She runs the office and handles the finances — I couldn’t do it without her. She’s been such a key part of our success.”

How did Rodriguez gain the know-how to run a successful enterprise? While he doesn’t have a business degree (He originally went to school to get an administration of justice degree and wanted to be a police officer), he says his brother is a contractor and so was his father, who’s now retired.

“I may not have a business background, but I’ve been around a business all of my life,” he says. “I also hired a good certified public accountant, which is a big help.”

There are many reasons why David Rodriguez, owner of Rodriguez Portables, prefers new trucks over used trucks, none the least of which is how they portray his company as a successful — and very professional — business.

“People see our newer trucks and say, ‘Look at this guy — he’s doing it,’” says Rodriguez, whose fleet includes five trucks, most of them less than three years old. “Investing in newer equipment is a key to success. It means everything — customers see that you take things seriously and provide them with great service.”

Rodriguez also likes newer trucks because they’re more dependable, which is no small thing with the high mileage his trucks accrue every year. He also prefers smaller trucks with slide-in units, which get better gas mileage and are easier to maneuver in tight quarters on urban construction sites.

“We also don’t have to find someone with a commercial driver’s license to drive them, plus we don’t have to stop at weigh scales, either,” he says. “And we save \$30,000 to \$40,000 per truck compared to buying bigger trucks.”

In addition, when a truck reaches the end of its life cycle, it’s easier to move a slide-in tank onto a new truck, Rodriguez adds.

The one exception to Rodriguez’s small-truck mindset is the company’s 2019 Chevrolet 6500, equipped with a 1,500-gallon aluminum tank and a Masport pump. The truck is used to pump out septic and holding tanks, as well as to transfer restroom waste to a treatment plant about an hour away that has significantly lower disposal fees than a local facility.

“That 1,500-gallon tank cost about \$30,000, but it’ll pay for itself within a year because of the lower fees,” Rodriguez notes.

The company also keeps its restroom inventory fully stocked with newer units.

“Providing customers with newer restrooms that aren’t broken down makes them feel better about the service we provide and I feel better, too,” he says. “Image is everything.”

As for what lies ahead, Rodriguez sees nothing but positives on the horizon.

“Mariana is just as determined and dedicated to grow the business as I am,” he says. “We don’t plan on hitting the brakes any time soon. It’s a great business.

“We have a good thing going and as long as customers keep asking for things, we’ll keep giving them what they want,” Rodriguez continues. “I feel like the sky’s the limit.” ■

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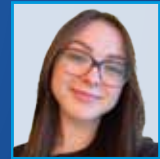


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Managers should strive to create environments that engage employees and bring out their best

By Ken Wysocky

Ask 50 different people what it means to have an accountable workforce and you could very well get 50 different answers. They might run the gamut from creating well-defined job descriptions and establishing measurable goals to promoting only deserving employees and developing clearly outlined punishment for on-the-job failures.

What's not in dispute is the harm wrought by lack of accountability — things like ineffective work practices, quality control issues, high employee turnover, and customers lost due to poor service. In fact, a Gallup poll estimates that lost productivity stemming from disengaged and unaccountable employees costs American businesses between \$287 and \$370 billion annually.

It's no small wonder that workplace accountability has become such a hot-button issue and the subject of numerous books, business columns and blogs. But before you start assessing employees with a RACI matrix (Respon-

sible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) or form "accountability centers" or try any of the other dozens of systems aimed at establishing workplace accountability, Paul Glen has a few words of sound advice: You can't force employees to be accountable, any more than you can force the proverbial horse to drink water.

What you can do, however, is create conditions under which employees are more likely to choose accountability. And punishment has nothing to do with it.

THE GREAT MOTIVATOR

"To me, accountability is an interior state of mind in which employees feel personally accountable for their own productions and work," says the award-winning author, management consultant and CEO of Leading Geeks. "The underlying assumption is that fear of being punished is a great motivator, and sometimes it is ... but ultimately, punishment is not a great motivator.

"People must be motivated to engage in their work, rather than be motivated to avoid a punishment. If employees are busy paying attention to punishment, they're not paying attention to their work. And if you're thinking through the lens of punishment to create accountability, you're already past the point where success is possible."

If managers can't force employees to be accountable, what can they do? Glen says it's actually quite simple: Create an environment where accountability can grow. To do that, he offers three specific things managers can do:

- 1. Explain the meaning of work to employees.** By this, Glen means going beyond just telling employees the facts surrounding their jobs. Instead, provide a broader worldview that gives them a context from which they can see the importance of what they do.

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As an example, he cites municipal sewer inspectors and maintenance workers. The basic facts of the job can be less than appealing: unglamorous working conditions in underground pipelines, dealing with sewage, repetitive tasks and so forth.

“But it becomes much more rewarding if they think about their jobs in terms of how they help maintain public health systems,” Glen says. “Consider the fact that the vast increase in human lifespans from age 45 to the mid-70s is mainly due to effective plumbing, not antibiotics. Or think of people dealing with the aftermath of a hurricane. Most people don’t think about how sewers work, but they’re important.”

2. Give employees control over their success and failure.

Creating an environment where employees feel empowered to succeed or fail on their own merits is a powerful motivator for accountability. But they need to feel their performance is being fairly judged.

“For example, say you have a work crew that’s unable to do its work until two previous crews finish their jobs,” Glen says. “But that third crew is told their performance will be judged by the timeliness of the first two crews. People are wired for fairness ... they don’t want to be punished because of someone else’s mistake.”

3. Provide employees a reasonable say in work evaluations.

Giving employees a voice in what criteria is used to judge their work also increases buy-in for accountability. For instance, evaluating all portable restroom technicians by how many units they service in a day, without taking into account route distance variations, etc., might lead to disengaged employees who believe the playing field is uneven.

“But if I feel like I’m in control of my work and have input into the criteria

used to judge my performance ... then preconditions exist that foster my feeling of responsibility and accountability for my own work,” Glen says.

PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Why is lack of accountability so widespread? Glen theorizes that part of it may stem from the traditional manager’s mindset that he or she is managing tasks, not people. They tend to think about employees as units of productivity — cogs in a machine — that must be punished if things don’t go well.

But each employee’s path to accountability is idiosyncratic, he says. Some are driven solely by career advancement. Others are driven to help people. Still more are spurred to be accountable because they like their colleagues and don’t want to let them down.

“So as a manager, you must create conditions under which most people can find their path to accountability,” Glen says. “I often relate it to the idea of gardening. The truth is, seeds will grow on their own, but you can create conditions that can help them grow. But even in a perfect greenhouse environment, some seeds still won’t grow.

“Managers often have a sense of causality or power that’s misplaced. They don’t realize they have very modest access to the interior lives of people who work for them — their emotions, personal motivations and so on. Many people respond differently to the same stimulus, so the actual cause and effect on their interior lives is much less than they’d like to believe.

“In fact, managers have more power to demotivate than to motivate. So the best you can do is create good conditions. After that, the employees must decide how to respond.” ■

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ODOR CONTROL

By Craig Mandli

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800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com



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800-338-3155; www.walex.com



Odor Control

ARMAL WAVE SCENT BOX

The Wave Scent Box from Armal incorporates a fragrance — vanilla balm, rose sensation, apple blossom, pinewood trail or strawberry field — in the wall panels of the restroom during the manufacturing process, ensuring a pleasant scent. The unit has a heavy-duty, spring-coil door with a wind-resistant device to ensure closure when unlocked and an overlapping wall assembly for greater safety. Options include a recirculating kit with filter and freshwater flush that works in combination with the pump kit.

866-873-7796; www.armal.biz



J&J PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS TRUOX POWER

The Truox Power line of products from J&J Portable Sanitation Products break down paper and waste to reduce mounding. The long-lasting deep blue color and fragrance are designed to provide a fresh and clean experience for users. For those looking for a mess-free solution, Truox Power Packets are water-soluble packets in a nonstaining blue color and are available in a variety of sizes and fragrances. For those who prefer a liquid deodorizer, Truox Liquid Power prevents scale buildup, and is available in a variety of strengths and fragrances. The Truox Squeeze Bottle is a 1-liter bottle of Truox Liquid Power that allows service providers to control the strength. It speeds up productivity as well as reduces costly spills, and is available in a case of 12 bottles.

800-345-3303; www.jjportable.com



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Johnny's Choice Toss-Ins are a premeasured portion packet of dry deodorant in a water-soluble pouch for use in portable restrooms. The portion packs make it easy and convenient to provide service without a mess. They can control foul odors in portable restrooms in all seasons. They have a nonstaining royal blue color to hide waste and a fruity floral scent. They also help break down toilet paper and waste. They are available in three sizes.

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800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com



SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS POTTY FRESH PLUS P.T. SPRAY DOWN

Potty Fresh Plus P.T. Spray Down water-soluble spray from Surco Portable Sanitation Products is designed to eliminate stubborn odors and dirt in portable restrooms and provide long-lasting freshness. It uses Metazene, an odor-neutralizing additive that destroys particles that cause vaporuous malodors at their molecular level, to clean and disinfect portable restroom units. Spray it on directly or mix it with water. It's available in five fragrances — Xtreme clean, cherry, lavender, super spice or bubblegum — packaged in cases of four 1-gallon jugs, 5-gallon pails or 55-gallon drums.

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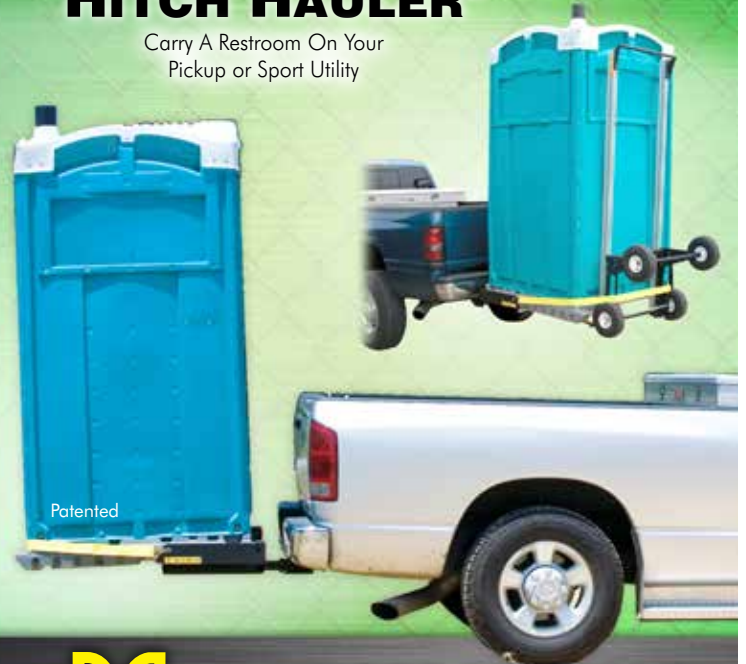
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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Toss-ins help take control of odors

By Craig Mandli

Combating foul odor in portable restrooms is a constant challenge for PROs. If the complaints get bad enough, business suffers. That's why it's important to have an easy solution on the service truck to fight back.

Toi-De-Fresh Toss Ins from **Century Chemical** are designed to let PROs take control of odors with a reformulated enzyme-based toss-in packet. One packet is designed to clean and deodorize for up to a week, while helping to break down tissue and waste.

"Our new Toi-De-Fresh Toss-Ins are engineered to mask the odor, mask the sight, and digest the waste, paper, oils, grease and protein found in holding tanks," says Denyse Pontius, president of Century Chemical. "The Toss-Ins are adaptable to both portable restrooms and restroom trailer tanks, as they are easy to use and powerful without the hazards of making a mess that liquids can cause."

According to Pontius, the product is aimed at convenience. They come as premeasured water-soluble toss-in packets kept in a resealable bag for simple, efficient storage on the truck or in a warehouse. There are 55 packets per bag, with six bags per case. One packet can treat up to 40 gallons of tank capacity for a week. In addition to portable restrooms, the packets can be used to treat holding tanks on recreational vehicles, charter buses and boats while helping to break down waste and tissue. They come in a pleasant baby powder fragrance. Pontius says the company took research and development of the new toss-ins seriously.

"It took about one year of testing to get the right blend of fragrance, dye, bacteria and enzymes," she says. "The toss-ins are a great fit for us because they fill the needs of many of our customers, and provide a powerful, tested-to-work formula."

They are the latest addition to the Toi-De-Fresh line of portable sanitation products available in super-concentrated and premixed formulas in both formaldehyde and nonformaldehyde variations. The items can be paired with Super Mask masking agent and the company's line of all-purpose cleaners and citrus degreasers.

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Satellite Industries announces John Babcock as CEO

Satellite Industries announced the promotion of John Babcock to CEO. Babcock served as president of Satellite Industries for the past eight years and has worked for the portable sanitation industry manufacturer for more than 30 years. He joined Satellite Industries in 1992 as a customer service representative, advancing through multiple leadership positions in the company from vice president of Satellite Japan to vice president of supply chain, vice president of finance, chief financial officer, president and now to CEO. Satellite is in its 65th year of serving the portable sanitation industry.



John Babcock

SSPMA offers new scholarship program

The Sump and Sewage Pump Manufacturers Association announced the opening of its 2024/2025 SSPMA scholarship program. This year's program will award up to two scholarships for \$2,500 each to students working toward

an associate, bachelor's, master's degree or appropriate certification/trade associated with wastewater management. Applicants may apply online at sspma.org/scholarship by June 1. Formed in 1956, the SSPMA is a North American trade organization representing a majority of the manufacturers of sump, effluent and sewage pumps, together with component and accessory suppliers.

KeeVac Industries announces new owners

KeeVac Industries has new owners, Ron and Jules Bain. Previously, Ron was behind-the-scenes upfitting trucks for KeeVac, and now has acquired the public facing side of the business. Getting its start in a small two-bay garage, KeeVac has grown into a single, large facility located in Denver. ■





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You're probably aware by now that we enlisted the help of actor and celebrity personality Richard Karn to help us spread the word about the many exciting things going on at PolyJohn.

Richard stars in a new video series we produced, and we're excited to share these videos with you so you can learn why there's never been a better time to choose PolyJohn.

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