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EFFECTIVE TRAINING STRATEGIES TO SUSTAIN YOUR COMPANY’S GROWTH
by Jay Bruesch, Plunkett’s Pest Control, Inc.
Whether your company is large or small, you’re probably growing, and you probably have some turnover to deal with. In all likelihood, you have veteran employees with many years’ experience; and you have newly hired “rookies” who must step into the shoes of persons who have been promoted, who have retired or left the company for other reasons, or who are taking on a new route created by growth.

ACE THE PEST MANAGEMENT WORLD
By Amy Bell
Thousands of pest management professionals are becoming a “yardstick” of excellence in their firms. How are they accomplishing such a feat? By becoming ACE (Associate Certified Entomologist) certified. Offered by The Entomological Society of America (ESA) Certification Corporation, the ACE certification program allows pest management professionals become credentialed experts in their field—which makes them more desirable to potential customers and employers.

TAKE THE TRAIN TO SUCCESS
By Amy Bell
In today’s tough economy, some pest management firms are struggling to stay afloat—and as a result, many have moved training programs to the back burner. However, studies show a lack of continuing education can be harmful to a company’s health. If you want your firm to flourish, a first-class training program is key.
NPMA’s Jobs Initiative

One of the primary concerns facing our members is the ability to effectively recruit and retain skilled employees. In response to this, NPMA staff initiated a workforce development project with an overarching goal of helping the industry have a larger pool of qualified technician candidates from which to hire. And, while this may be the primary focus of the project, there is also work to be done in teaching better hiring practices to ensure that time is spent on selecting the right candidates and learning how to keep those who do enter the field.

Throughout numerous meetings, the NPMA team worked with volunteers to identify the challenges related to finding and retaining technicians. Challenges, such as ineffective training, lack of job preparation, and ineffective hiring practices were discussed and the team is developing solutions to respond to these issues—including the development of an online model technician training program. Additionally, the entire program for this year’s Academy is focused on finding—and keeping—the right team.

However, probably the most exciting outcome of this initiative to date is the development of our recruitment video series. The series encompasses one main video and supplemental demographically targeted videos—to include veterans and women. The main video focuses on the benefits of working in the pest management industry and seeks to dispel some of the common misnomers. Showcasing real pest management professionals, the video is available for NPMA members to use during career fairs, on their Web sites, or in whatever manner works best in their market. Additionally, NPMA will be promoting the video series through various channels—including online, social media, and through other professional associations.

Finally, late last year, NPMA launched an online career center at careers.npmapestworld.org. With its focus on pest management professionals, the Career Center will offer you—and the industry at large—an easy-to-use and highly targeted resource for online employment connections.

As always, if you have any questions about any of NPMA’s programs or services, please do not hesitate to contact us at npma@pestworld.org.
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Whether your company is large or small, you’re probably growing, and you probably have some turnover to deal with. In all likelihood, you have veteran employees with many years’ experience; and you have newly hired “rookies” who must step into the shoes of persons who have been promoted, who have retired or left the company for other reasons, or who are taking on a new route created by growth.

In all of these instances, you would very much like your newest employees to perform at the same level as your experienced veterans, and you’d like to bring them up to speed as quickly as possible. That’s where a thoughtfully designed training program comes in, and that’s why you need to design each and every training activity with maximum efficiency in mind.

Creating training is a lot like a journey. Did you ever leave on a trip without first looking at a map to find out how to get there? If you start out without a road map to where you’re going, you’ll get there, but you won’t have any idea where you’re going, and you won’t know when you’ve arrived. Worse, you might not like the place where you end up.

There are many different kinds of training: training on a single topic or skill; whole-day training events with multiple topics divided into shorter sessions; and training programs that go on for many days—for example, a training program to prepare new technicians for certification and licensing. No matter what kind of training program you need to make, you must follow these guidelines—or get stuck because you failed to plan. It’s as easy as Get Ready, Get Set, and Go!

**Get Ready: Business–Needs Statement**

Do this simple exercise before you start any training activity: tell yourself that your people lack a skill or some knowledge they need; describe what you’d like them to do or say that they currently do not do or say; and then tell yourself that a training activity will accomplish the desired result. Why do this? You must do this because training is not always the answer to a problem. For example, let’s say you have an employee whose rodent work is sloppy; he fails to clean traps to your company’s standards, and sometimes skips a trap or “pre-dates” traps, writing an entire month’s worth of service dates on the traps’ dating tags or stickers at the beginning of the month. Does this employee need to be trained in how to service a trap? No, he knows how; he just chooses to cut corners. This is a discipline problem, not a training need. Writing a simple statement, called a rationale or a business-needs statement, proves to you that there is a lack of skill or knowledge, and that training will fix the gap. Here is an example of a business-needs statement that one might write prior to beginning work on a training exercise:
Each technician has a sprayer, and is responsible for its care and maintenance. Currently, many technicians do not care for their equipment, with the result that the sprayer doesn’t work when they need it to. A 45-minute sprayer maintenance and repair clinic would result in technicians paying attention to their sprayers and would enable them to diagnose problems and repair them before they cause problems and service delays.

Try this yourself. Think of something you wish your employees would do, or would do more effectively. Tell yourself that there is a deficiency, and then identify what the desired outcome or behavior would be. Then say that training will solve this problem. Rationale or business-needs statements do not have to be fancy; they don’t even have to be good. But you must do this step, or you’ll be in the dark as you design your training activity.

Get Set: Performance Objectives

In order to focus your training on the right content and to avoid wandering all over the place, you must next write a small number of performance objectives. Performance objectives are descriptions of what your learners will do or say as a result of having taken part in training. When writing performance objectives, be specific. Avoid phrases like “learners will understand” or “learners will be able to.” Instead, use verbs that describe an action they will do as they demonstrate competency with the material on which you trained. Describe the conditions under which mastery will be measured, and state the criterion for acceptable performance. Here is an example:

Upon completion of this training exercise, learners will do the following:

- Given a sprayer with one or more parts malfunctioning, the learner will observe the sprayer’s operation, determine what part is faulty, and will replace the faulty part and restore the sprayer to working order.

In this example, notice that we (1) stated what the learner will do or say as she or he demonstrates mastery of the skill (we used the verbs “observe,” determine, replace, and restore); (2) described the conditions under which mastery will be assessed and resources with which the learner will be provided (“Given a sprayer with one or more parts malfunctioning”); and (3) explained the criterion for mastery (“restore the sprayer to working order”). Do these three simple things for each training activity, and you will benefit from the laser focus of well-planned training.

Keep the number of performance objectives to a minimum—six to eight is probably reasonable. If you find that you have significantly more than twelve, you should consider breaking the material up into multiple activities. Remember that a normal adult’s attention span for a single learning activity is around 15 minutes.

Now, you give it a try. Using the same imaginary training need as the one for which you practiced writing a business needs statement, write some performance objectives. Remember to use verbs that describe what the learner does or says as she or he demonstrates mastery of the skill.

Go: Create Content

Keep the performance objectives you created in mind as you design content. Content can come from a subject matter expert (SME), which simply means you find someone who is good at the topic or skill you want people to learn, and let that person write some “talking points.” Subject matter experts are not teachers or trainers, though. You’ll have to guide your SME through the process of distilling their knowledge or skills into content for your training activity. Prepare a list of questions and interview the SME: What are the most important talking points? What do I need in order to do this skill? What steps do I follow? How do I know I’ve been successful?

Content can also come from many other sources, such as a textbook, training manual, demonstration, pesticide label, government regulation, inspection standard, or from approved company procedures.

Content can take many shapes as you turn it into training or learning activities: you might create a PowerPoint presentation for a meeting; an online training module using one of the many authoring...
tools available (Lectora, Adobe Presenter, etc.); a video presentation with a pre-test and a post-test; or a demonstration with hands-on practice.

Content might involve a single, twenty-minute activity; or it might amount to multiple sessions over the space of a day or more. You may even be tasked with responsibility for creating an entire training program spanning several weeks or months. Whichever is the case, keep this in mind:

All training is more meaningful when it is interactive. Adult learners don't want to be lectured to. Instead, find ways to keep them active. If you want to teach a skill, provide opportunities for everyone to practice the skill. If your activity involves facts and knowledge, include a quiz, a roundtable discussion, or some other way for people to “operate” on the material.

Adult learners retain only about 5% of what they hear in a spoken lecture; when given an opportunity to discuss a subject in a group, they retain ten times as much. They retain 75% of what they practice by doing, so always offer lots of practice.

The most powerful learning method of all is “teaching back.” If a person learns something, and then immediately has a chance to teach the skill or knowledge to someone else, retention is 90%. This is another reason why every training event should have some roundtable discussion. People take the material being taught and “run with it,” sharing their own relevant experiences and getting answers from each other. Peer-to-peer interaction trumps instructor-led PowerPoint presentations every time.

Summary

Use this magic formula for all training programs, large and small:

- Start by writing a business needs statement so that you are sure training is the answer to a real problem.
- Write a limited number of performance objectives, telling what your learners will do or say as they demonstrate that they have mastered the skill or knowledge.
- And don't be shy—let your own company’s subject matter experts provide grist for the training mill. 

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Steve Jobs once said, “Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where excellence is expected.” Hundreds of pest management professionals are taking Jobs’ sage advice and becoming a “yardstick” of excellence in their firms. How are they accomplishing such a feat? By becoming ACE (Associate Certified Entomologist) certified.

Offered by The Entomological Society of America (ESA) Certification Corporation, the ACE certification program allows pest management professionals become credentialed experts in their field—which makes them more desirable to potential customers and employers. Because the ACE program is designed to benefit the practicing pest control professional, applicants must demonstrate a solid grasp of the practical aspects of applied entomology, but an advanced degree is not required.

“The ACE program started in 2004 when there became an apparent need to have a professional credentialing program for the pest management industry,” explains Chris Stelzig, Director of Certification for ESA. “We already had the BCE (Board Certified Entomologist) program, which focused more on individuals with an advanced degree. However, the ACE program fills the niche for those professionals who have the same type of experience but have not gone through higher education.”

Since the program was founded, ACE has grown by an average of 35 percent each year. “Last year, we grew 37 percent,” says Stelzig. “I think it speaks to the demand in the pest management industry for professional credentialing programs. We’re really delighted that this has been so broadly received.”

Read on to discover the incredible value ACE certification provides and what it takes to become an ACE.

**Boundless Benefits**

Ask any ACE certified pest management professional why they chose to become certified, and you’ll get an earful about the countless advantages.

“We are in the business of solving problems for our customers,” says Marie A. Horner, Vice President of Operations with Terminix. “It’s important that I set the example for our team members so they understand the more we know, the bigger benefit we are to our customers. Ongoing training and certification for everyone in our company is a priority to us.”

Plus, when one professional in a company becomes ACE certified, it often creates a positive domino effect.
Horner says since she earned her certification, four of her team members have asked how to start the process. “In an industry where everyone provides the same service by using the same materials, the difference is your team,” she points out. “What a great benefit to your customer when their service is being provided by an ACE!”

Brett Partin, Training Director with OPC Pest Control, believes the ACE accreditation makes his customers more comfortable and trusting of his knowledge and experience. “I think having those three simple letters after my name helps my customers and potential customers know that I take my profession seriously and continue to educate myself to help them with any potential pest problems,” he adds.

James Rodriguez, National Marketing Manager with J.T. Eaton Co., Inc. reflects that sentiment. “I chose to become ACE certified because it was an opportunity to continue my commitment to the pest control industry and build on the current pest control-related licenses I’ve obtained throughout my career,” he explains.

Rodriguez goes on to say that ACE certification should be standard for everyone in the pest control industry because it improves the way professionals approach insect problems. “It solidified my knowledge as a true Integrated Pest Management Professional. Studying for the exam reaffirmed that there were several things I’ve not yet encountered in my career, due to my geographical location. It’s broadened my overall knowledge and reinvigorated me to be mindful of new emerging pests and seasonal issues in other states. It also heightened my awareness of insect issues, so I can help J.T. Eaton improve its products manufactured specifically for the pest control industry.”

Boost Your Value
Although the ACE certification process isn’t easy, most pest management professionals say it is well worth the time and effort.

Since becoming ACE certified, Rodriguez says, “I hold more value to my employer, my customers benefit from the added knowledge I gained from striving towards this certification, and I distinguish myself from my competition to potential customers.”

ACING THE PROCESS

So how exactly does a pest management professional begin the ACE certification process? Stelzig says the first step is to ensure that you meet the following requirements:

- A licensed applicator with a current U.S. state, military, territory, or tribal-issued certificate that allows you to apply pesticides in an urban, industrial, or structural setting without supervision.
- A minimum of 7 years of verifiable pest management experience in the United States
- Ability to take and pass an online test of your knowledge of structural pest control.
- Pay the application fee, which includes your first year of certification and the online examination.
- Willingness to adhere to the ACE Code of Ethics.

If you meet these requirements, you may submit an application (available at www.entocert.org) along with a copy of your current pesticide applicator’s license, a resume and the application fee.

Once the ESA accepts your application, then comes the tough part: passing the exam. “The exam is based on four broad areas of knowledge: Inspection and Identification, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Selection and Implementation of Control Methods,” Stelzig explains. “These are very broad areas and there’s a number of skills under each of those knowledge domains. We’re working on a true study guide, but until we have that in place, we recommend a number of tools people can use as they study and prepare for the exam.”

Horner admits that the test was no walk in the park. “It was very hard, but I committed to myself that I would pass this test and made the time to study and prepare,” she says. “The sense of accomplishment is amazing when you have to work for it.”

Partin agrees the exam was extremely challenging, saying it encompassed a wide variety of nationwide pest topics, from pest biology, habits, food preference and harborage to control tactics and application methods. “Anyone looking to get their ACE certification should study as much as they can prior to taking it,” he suggests.

“Not only did [the exam] call upon my years of field experience, but it required some serious research on my part as well. But once I got in groove I moved right along, and I found the research to be fascinating.”

JAMES RODRIGUEZ, NATIONAL MARKETING MANAGER, J.T. EATON CO., INC.
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TAKING THE TRAIN TO SUCCESS
BY AMY BELL

Want your firm to flourish? A first-class training program is key.

In today’s tough economy, some pest management firms are struggling to stay afloat—and as a result, many have moved training programs to the back burner. However, studies show a lack of continuing education can be harmful to a company’s health.

According to a 2010 Louis Harris and Associates poll, 41 percent of employees with poor training opportunities said they plan to leave their current company within a year as compared to only 12 percent of workers who considered their company’s training opportunities to be excellent. In other words, companies with superior continuing education programs enjoy a retention rate more than two-thirds higher than those with lackluster training opportunities.

To top it off, employee development can improve employer bottom-line profitability by increasing revenues and lowering expenses, according to research by the National Network of Sector Partners.

“The [pest control] industry has made great effort to raise its level of professionalism, and professional development is a key component,” remarks Greg Baumann, Vice President of Training and Technical Services at Rollins, Inc. “I think as an industry, we’ve gotten into a mindset that what the states require is all the people really need. But training is a real investment and something we all need to take very seriously.”

Baumann says pest management companies need to offer training to ensure their employees stay sharp in all aspects of the business: from customer service and equipment maintenance to biology and pest control.

Shay Jones Runion, Chief HR Officer at Arrow Exterminators reflects this sentiment, saying professional development is crucial to a company’s success. “Professional development is so important in this industry because our team members are going in to homes of our customers, which is a unique service relationship,” she explains. “We must focus on customer service and respect the families and properties we serve. The industry is evolving, and staying abreast of changes to technology, inspection and application techniques and equipment is a necessity.”

**Training Wheels**

Although every pest management company must meet minimum training requirements, some firms offer extensive training programs that go far above and beyond these regulatory obligations. “At Rollins, Inc., we go way above and beyond the state and provincial minimum requirements,” says Baumann. “We take training very seriously.”

At Rollins, Inc. every technician must complete the company’s “blended learning” program, which includes a combination of online training, on-the-job-training, exams and even live broadcasts. “Because we have 10,000 employees nationwide, we reach them through an interactive live broadcast,” Baumann explains. “This allows them to be in a branch or even in their own home and take a course live, and they can be called on to ask questions and participate in instant polls.”

If a participant has a question during these live broadcasts, he can simply press a button that says, “Raise hand.” The class instructor can call on him so everyone listening can hear his question. Additionally, Baumann says they offer text chat during the
broadcasts. “So, as the technicians are watching the course, someone can type into the text box, ‘Yeah I’ve had that problem too,’ and they can share their story with everyone watching,” Baumann explains. “It’s really interactive.”

When Rollins recently conducted a live broadcast on a few technical topics for state recertification, Baumann says it was a huge hit with their technicians. “At one point, we had more than 300 people watching it in one time zone…and none of them were here at the training center where we were broadcasting live,” he comments. “It may not be practical for most companies, but because we’re so large and spread out, it’s a really good tool for us.”

In addition to the broadcasts, Rollins technicians are also required do their pre-work, which is mostly online, and post-work, which is primarily an exam. “We also have people out in the field called certified field trainers,” Baumann adds. “These trainers actually go out with new hires and work with them face-to-face and hands-on to affirm what they learned on the broadcast.”

Of course, Rollins, Inc. isn’t the only company with an extensive training program. In fact, quite a few pest management companies have individuals or even entire teams devoted solely to training and development.

For example, Arrow Exterminators, based in Atlanta, Georgia, has a dedicated Training and Professional Development Team known as Arrow University. This group is responsible for creating, developing and implementing training programs throughout the entire organization.

“The team works closely with various departments throughout the company to research specific training topics so that the development of courses will fit the mission, vision, needs and goals of Arrow,” Runion explains. “The Arrow University team is made up of Arrow team members who have all worked in different aspects of our business and were promoted from within. They work to ensure all training delivers a consistent message throughout the organization and thus create a culture of learning and career development.”

One Size Does NOT Fit All

When it comes to training programs, cookie cutter solutions simply won’t pan out. That’s why it’s important for each pest management company to create a unique training program based on their size, geographic location, philosophy and other factors.

“One size does not fit all. Most pest control companies are a lot smaller than Rollins, so what works for us may not work for someone else,” Baumann explains. “You have to find the optimal training program for your company.”

As pest management firms build a professional development program, it’s also important to take the generational differences of technicians into consideration. “The pest control industry has to look at the new generation of hires we’re attracting,” Baumann points out. Because this new generation is constantly on-the-go and permanently attached

Arrow also employs Field Trainers, Customer Care department trainers, Customer Care Specialist Trainers and Home Evaluator Sales Managers/Trainers that are in the field each and every day working with their team members.

Arrow also offers 24/7 training through Arrow University’s E-Learning Center. For continuing education and compliance training, Arrow employees are required to attend quarterly training which meets licensing requirements in all the states where the company operates. To top it off, Arrow provides safety presentations and training programs at each of their service centers during Friday morning meetings.

Runion says new hires attend New Employee Training either in-person at the National Training Center or through the E-Learning Center. “Each position also has a training checklist for onboarding as well as for compliance training,” she explains. “In addition, Service Professionals receive hands-on, on-the-job training from our Technical Field Trainers.”

Plus, Arrow University offers licensing and certification training materials from their resource library, and all team members have access to cross-training, leadership training, computer, personal finance training and more through the E-Learning Center.

“We want our team members to have a sense of pride for what they do day in and day out,” Runion emphasizes. “They are important in protecting the health and properties of the families we serve. With adult learning we know that training has to be interactive, interesting and provided in different formats.”
to their smartphones, pest management companies need to offer more mobile training solutions.

“People we’re hiring today live on their smartphones, and we can’t make them sit down and watch an hour long 20 year old video by the industry—they’re not going to get anything out of it,” Baumann adds. “They need interactive, and we really have to look at what the values are of the generation of new hires and adjust our training to meet their needs rather than them meeting our needs as trainers.” In fact, Rollins, Inc. is currently working on iPad and iPhone apps for training, including pest identification tools.

Runion whole-heartedly agrees, saying pest management companies have to get creative when it comes to effectively training this younger generation of technicians. “We all do some type of on-the-job training, but having a blended method of training for those who learn differently can help reiterate key points,” she explains. “At Arrow we pride ourselves in leading the industry into the future through the use of our STEPS field kits and technology such as handhelds and iPads.”

Reap the Rewards

Although each pest management company offers its own unique spin on training, one thing certain: The firms that invest time and money into training are reaping the benefits.

“Rollins as a company has done very well, and I think training is a large part of it,” Baumann states. While he admits it can be difficult to measure just how much training contributes to their success, he says Rollins handles a lot of large, sensitive accounts such as schools, hospitals and aircraft—and he believes their training offers an added level of comfort to these customers. His advice to other pest management companies is simple: “Try to optimize your training, and don’t make it the lowest priority because training pays huge dividends.”

“We want to see our team members succeed,” Runion says. “Arrow University’s motto is ‘Training Today for Tomorrow’s Success.’ We know we must prepare our team today for us to meet our future growth needs. A solid professional development program can create an internal bench of talent and help you move your company to the next level.”

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These days, it feels almost like a given that each company and brand with which you interact has a charitable cause on whose behalf they raise awareness and money through their customer and employee base. We experience these partnerships day in and day out—whether it’s at the grocery store checkout line, where we’re asked to donate a dollar to the store’s chosen non-profit partner, or online when perusing the websites of our favorite fashion or consumer packaged goods brands. In the era of the “mindful consumer,” people seem ever more conscious of the impact their purchase choices are having on the rest of the world, both on a regional and a global scale.

The increase of consumers who are paying just as much attention to the quality of a product as the giving philosophy of the company who makes said product, has spurred action on the corporate side of the equation. According to a 2013 study by the Center for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College, a whopping 97 percent of companies surveyed allocate money in the budget for formal corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, compared with 81 percent in 2010. Whether it’s integrating a sustainability initiative into their internal operations, or finding a worthy charity to support through fundraising efforts—there are a variety of ways for companies to launch their very own CSR program.

No matter if your business is large or small, there are many benefits associated with finding a way to give back—and encouraging your employees and customers to go along for the ride. Here are a few things to consider when putting together a successful community relations strategy:

**Identify a cause that resonates with your business.**

Taking on a formal CSR strategy can be a daunting endeavor for any business owner. Take some of the anxiety out of the process by selecting a cause that you and your employees can connect with and that naturally fits with your business or industry. Consider your customer base as well, since, depending on your fundraising strategies, you’ll likely be relying on their participation in addition to that of your employees. If you operate in a specific region, take into account the issues and topics of interest in that area and consider a local non-profit as opposed to a national one. Likewise, if your business spans several different cities or states, think a little more broadly to ensure the cause you choose will be meaningful across your locations.

Consider the case of Ella’s Kitchen, a popular brand of organic children’s food products. The company selected a home for orphaned children in Zambia to be a major recipient of its community service efforts. Not only does that connection further their corporate mission to positively impact the health of children throughout the world, but Zambia is also the birthplace of the company’s founder. It seems simple enough, but taking the time to find a cause you can feel passionate about can go a long way in establishing high participation levels among employees and customers.

Once you find a cause, and then select a related non-profit or grant recipient, be sure to do your due diligence to confirm the legitimacy and stability of the organization before contacting them to suggest a partnership. Websites such as CharityNavigator.org and GuideStar.org are helpful tools in evaluating the performance and rating of non-profit organizations across a wide variety of categories.
Make community service a priority across your organization.

Once you’ve identified a worthwhile charity, develop a program to support that charity through a combination of fundraising and volunteer opportunities for your employee and customer base. Work with your partner to identify existing initiatives in place throughout the year that your efforts may complement, but also to find new and exciting ways to tap into your customer base through new outreach tactics. For example, many non-profits have one major event or program each year that serves as the centerpiece for their calendar of events. Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation, a national organization that raises money for pediatric cancer research, hosts fundraising initiatives all year long, but celebrates “National Lemonade Days” during the first week of June every year. That week includes major partner outreach in the form of volunteer opportunities and sponsor event tie-ins, such as the option to host lemonade stands in communities across the country. Major sponsors have been known to take that opportunity to schedule their own employee-driven events and customer-focused outreach during that window to take advantage of the existing program and the heightened awareness of the non-profit at that time.

Getting employees excited about participating in your CSR program relies primarily on creating a variety of opportunities for them to get involved both during and after office hours. Many companies, large and small, have begun allowing employees to take a day off during the course of the year to volunteer. Consider offering that option to members of your staff who are interested in contributing extra time to support your non-profit partner. For example, if your efforts are on behalf of a local elementary school, allow your employees to make time to tutor students or participate in school cleanup events. Likewise, make sure the majority of outreach opportunities that occur after hours, or on weekends, are developed with your employee base in mind. For example, if you decide to coordinate a community 5K, and the majority of your employees are parents, be sure to open the event to allow children to participate, especially if it’s on a weekend. Ask employees to be involved in the planning process to encourage a connection to the cause and build enthusiasm for the fundraising efforts. That enthusiasm will easily translate to customers when it’s time to ask them to contribute as well.

Find a way to get your customers involved.

A lot of lessons can be learned from companies that do this right. One of the best examples in recent history is the holiday partnership between St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and a variety of large national retailers, such as Best Buy, CVS and Ann Taylor. During the holiday shopping season, retailers participate in a number of ways, by asking shoppers to donate while paying for their purchases; creating special edition products from which proceeds benefit St. Jude; and hosting special in-store events and promotions to support the charity. The retail giants taking part in this campaign gain positive recognition for their involvement while also taking advantage of the insanity of holiday shopping rush to raise awareness and funds for a worthy cause. At the same time, customers get to feel good about the purchases they are making, knowing they are doing more than simply buying holiday gifts.

The key to finding ways to get customers to feel compelled to take part in your CSR program is to keep things simple and straightforward. It’s no surprise that the easier it is for people to contribute, the more likely they will be to want to take part. Streamline your fundraising process, and communicate it to your customers with succinct, compelling messaging. Put that messaging in action in the vehicles you use to communicate with your customers most often—whether it’s via social media channels like Facebook or through a monthly customer newsletter and signage, or printed materials in your business location. Most non-profits have communications and marketing teams you may be able to consult with, so be sure to look into that option if your own marketing resources are limited.

Making the decision to give back via a CSR program is a noble endeavor that many business owners feel is worth the effort. As with so many business strategies, the keys to success lie in finding a strong partner, developing a thought-out and comprehensive plan and spending time communicating that plan to your audience. Helping others is always worthwhile and your work can be quite impactful, especially when it’s a group effort.
Q When inspecting sticky traps, I noticed two projections off the back end of a brown cockroach. What are these things and what purpose do they serve?

A The projections you saw are called cerci, paired appendages and found on nearly every insect. In some species, the cerci (singular: cercus) are large and pronounced, while in others they are reduced and hardly visible. Given the discrepancy in appearance, you could rightly guess that they function differently for different insects. In cockroaches, especially pestiferous species, cerci provide a valuable service in predator aversion. Cockroaches love tight spaces, many of which allow cockroaches only to move forward or backward. In this position, the cockroach can use its antennae and cerci to detect air movement and vibrations from ahead and behind.

The most prominent cerci in the insect world belong to earwigs. Their cerci, commonly called pinchers, are used extensively in defensive behaviors, and will readily try to ‘bite’ you with them if handled. The presence and activity of their cerci is most likely a major reason why earwigs are both detested and feared by homeowners. For those identifying earwigs, this is a major feature used to separate species and even determine gender. Some are toothed, some smooth, some cross over each other while others do not.

Q When I read technical material, I see the words ‘nymphs’ and ‘larvae’ used to describe immature insects. Is there a difference between these two words and if so, how do you know when to use which word?

A This is an excellent question. There certainly is a difference between the two and there are fairly clear-cut instances when to use each one, however, even entomologists accidentally misuse them. The difference stems from what group of insects the immature specimen belongs to. Immature insects belonging to groups that have a complete, 4-stage holometabolous metamorphosis are referred to as larvae (egg, larva, pupa, adult). This term causes additional confusion because you typically only hear the word larvae (lar-vee), which refers to multiple immature insects in this set. Immature insects belonging to groups that have an incomplete, 3-stage hemimetabolous metamorphosis are called nymphs (egg, nymph, adult).

The key to knowing which insects fit in which group can be mastered through memorization or by considering what you know about the immature and adult stages of pest insects. Nymphs look a whole lot like the adults they will develop into; think about how German cockroaches resemble adults, just smaller and without wings. Larvae almost invariably look nothing like the adults of their species. Compare fly maggots to adults, or caterpillars to butterflies.

Of course there are exceptions. The most notable and relevant comes from the termites. Although termites are hemimetabolous, their complex lifecycle has led to both ‘nymph’ and ‘larvae’ being used to describe different life stages. Termite ‘larvae’ are non-differentiated immatures, while ‘nymph’ is used to describe termites that will develop into alates or secondary reproductives. So for termites, a larva may develop into a nymph or a worker.
Q: I recently read a newspaper article about RNAi technology and how it might be used against agricultural pests. What is RNAi technology and will it have applications in structural pest management?

A: RNAi, ribonucleic acid interference, is a method of preventing the production of very specific protein(s) in a target organism. For those of you unfamiliar with genetics, or perhaps a little rusty, genes inside cells are responsible for making specific proteins. The production of proteins is essential for all biological processes and for all living organisms to function. The types of proteins produced varies by cell type and the needs of the organism and genes are turned on or off based on those needs. Genes are controlled by RNA, which are single stranded molecules which serve as an intermediary between DNA and the synthesis of proteins. There are multiple types of RNA (messenger RNA, transfer RNA, ribosomal RNA), but the key point is that RNA determines which genes are turned on or off.

By interfering with an insect’s RNA, you could prevent specific proteins from being produced (also called ‘gene silencing’). For the purposes of structural pest control, you can imagine that this technology would offer many benefits. The primary advantage would be that insecticides using RNAi as a mode of action would be made so specific that non-target organisms are not at risk. In fact, RNAi insecticides could be functional only on a single species. As a burgeoning technology, there are still a lot of questions to be answered from a scientific, manufacturing, and application angle, but the future appears to be bright for this cutting-edge mode of action. Don’t get too excited, as practical application of RNAi for structural pest management is likely years away. ☺

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