NPMA LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

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Going Mobile Will Change the Way Technicians Work

Information doesn’t tie us down today, and it’s changing the way business works. Most pest companies expect employees to use mobile devices to respond to customers quickly, and keep tabs on the office, but technicians could be even more effective if they had the same resources on site that they have back on the office computer.

GEARING UP FOR LEGISLATIVE DAY
by Amy Bell

This March, NPMA staff and members will climb Capitol Hill in Washington DC—and this isn’t just a field trip. What’s the occasion? It’s called Legislative Day, and it’s one of the most important events of the year for the National Pest Management Association. This is when pest management professionals have the golden opportunity to meet with their members of Congress to discuss critical issues that affect the industry.
CEO'S MESSAGE

Make a Difference

Since the first NPMA Legislative Day in 1987, pest management professionals making the annual trek to Washington, DC, have directly impacted federal public policy. In fact, it’s proven that in-person visits that have the most impact on a Senator or Representative who is undecided on an issue. Built on the foundation that no one voice carries more weight with elected officials than your own, on March 13–15 hundreds of pest management professionals will gather in Washington, D.C. at the 29th anniversary of Legislative Day for the opportunity for our industry’s voice to be heard.

This year’s visits to Capitol Hill will provide a tremendous opportunity to make an impression on your Members of Congress. More than ever, you need to establish a line of communication and develop a relationship with your Representative, Senators, and their staff. Never forget that your Representative and Senators work for, and are accountable to you!

Our sessions this year will focus on important topics such as pesticides, structural fumigation, employee compensation, and the employee life cycle. Our keynote speakers include former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer; CNN Political Commentator Paul Begala; Former White House Director of Communications Nicolle Wallace; and political commentator SE Cupp.

In the years since the first annual Legislative Day, the pest management industry has gone from status-quo to proactive. Change is inevitable, especially over a significant period of time, but your association provides the strength, the vision, and the infrastructure to move the industry forward in order to grow. And, while NPMA provides the strength, the vision, and the infrastructure to move the industry forward in order to grow. But the biggest part of this successful equation is you. The fact is, nothing makes a bigger impression on your legislators than a visit from YOU. I urge you to participate in Legislative Day—it is your opportunity to make a difference.

P.S. For a preview of the issues that will be highlighted at Legislative Day, see page 4. «
LEGISLATIVE DAY
March 13-15, 2016 | Washington, DC | Capital Hilton

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NPMA
National Pest Management Association
This March, NPMA staff and members will climb Capitol Hill in Washington DC—and this isn’t just a field trip. What’s the occasion? It’s called Legislative Day, and it’s one of the most important events of the year for the National Pest Management Association. This is when pest management professionals have the golden opportunity to meet with their members of Congress to discuss critical issues that affect the industry.
“We’ll be going up on Capitol Hill, all 400 of us,” explains Andrew Bray, NPMA Director of Regulatory Affairs. “We’re going to have face-to-face meetings on the House side and on the Senate side with actual representatives and senators to talk about these issues.”

NPMA members will primarily be talking about legislation and regulations that could affect the pest management industry. “All of these changes have the possibility to significantly impact your pest management business,” Bray remarks. “That’s the bottom line. As advocates for the pest management industry, we track anything and everything that we think could have an impact, good or bad, on our industry.”

Bray adds that it’s crucial for NPMA members across the nation to get involved with this legislative process. “There’s only so much the NPMA public policy team can do as advocates, because grassroots efforts—members actually talking with their members of Congress—is by far the most effective advocacy,” he says. “That’s why Legislative Day is so important.”

Here are the three key issues NPMA members will hash out on Capitol Hill this spring:

### New Overtime Regulations

In July 2015, the Department of Labor (DOL) released a proposal for new overtime regulations. These new regulations are in response to a 2014 directive by President Obama to update overtime rules under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

“This has been one of our top priorities,” Bray says.

Under current regulations, if any worker earns less than $23,660 a year ($455 a week)—regardless if they are paid a salary or hourly wages—their employer is required to pay them overtime when the employee works more than 40 hours during a work week. FLSA guarantees overtime pay at a rate of one and one-half times the employee’s regular rate of pay. “So a lot of people may say, ‘Well, I make salary so I don’t get overtime,’ but that’s not true,” Bray points out. “You are guaranteed overtime if you make under that amount.”

Currently, employees making over the $23,660 annual threshold are eligible for overtime unless they fall under a specific industry exemption (teachers, doctors, lawyers) or the “white collar exemption.” These exemptions include executive, administrative, professional, outside sales and computer employees.

However, the Department of Labor is proposing to raise the minimum overtime threshold from $23,660 to approximately $50,440 ($970 per week). “That’s a 113% increase,” Bray comments. The new proposed threshold level is equal to the 40th percentile of weekly earnings for full-time salaried workers.

“So if this were to go into effect, anyone making under $50,000 a year, regardless of whether they’re paid salary or hourly, will need to be paid overtime if they work over 40 hours a week,” he says. “That’s a big concern for us especially because they don’t make any regional distinctions.” Based on cost of living and other economic factors, a $50,000 income is much different in New York City than it is in say, Dothan, Alabama. “We have members throughout the nation, and many of these companies operate in places with a different cost-of-living than New York City. It’s really tough to understand how the government failed to consider the wide range of wages and the cost of living in different regions.”

The Department of Labor estimates that approximately 4.6 million employees who are currently exempt based on the $23,660 threshold, will become eligible for overtime under the $50,440 threshold. “Because the $23,000 threshold hasn’t been raised since 2004, we understand the need to potentially raise that number—but a knee jerk response like this just is not economically viable,” Bray says. “Companies won’t be able to adapt quickly to it. After talking to some of our member companies, we don’t even think doing this will even protect the people they’re attempting to protect.”

Bray believes if the new overtime rule goes into effect, many pest management companies won’t be able to offer the same employee flexibility they’ve provided in the past. He gives this example: Under the current rule, many workers are afforded the flexibility to skip a lunch break or work longer one day so they can leave early another day to go see their kid’s soccer game. However, Bray says if this new rule goes into effect, employers are going to say if you make under $50,000, you cannot work any more than 40 hours a week. “You’ll need to punch in and out any time you leave to do anything, and you need to take exactly a 30 minute lunch break” he predicts. “and just because an employee could earn overtime pay, it doesn’t guarantee that those hours will be available to work. I think many employers will restrict hours to under 40 in...
order to control operating costs.” Bray concludes, We don’t think less flexibility and less opportunity is what people want. So we think this is actually going to hurt the very people they’re attempting to protect.”

Bray also points out the big issue of bonuses. “As a growing industry, our members support their employees and give them incentive bonuses—and it’s unclear how this new rule would actually work with bonuses. Do they calculate it as part of your yearly income? It’s been proposed that it’s only supposed to count for 10%, which we think is unfair as well.” Of course, incentive bonuses are a win-win for both the employer and the employee because they encourage employees to work harder. “Everyone benefits from these bonuses—but if you’re only going to count 10% of it, what’s the motive for an employer to provide that bonus and risk paying potentially exorbitant overtime wages?”

To further complicate the issue, under the DOL’s proposed new rule, the income limit will be indexed to maintain the salary threshold at the 40th percentile. “So they would index the $50,000 limit to go up every year depending on other economic factors,” Bray explains. “That means all of a sudden 60 days before the end of the year, employers could be scrambling to deal with a new threshold number. Maybe it’s $50,000 in 2017 and then it’s $55,000 in 2018. This unknown variable would force employers to scramble and maybe change the entire way they do payroll—and we think that’s ridiculous.”

Lastly, the new rule does not propose changes to the current exemptions, including the “white collar exemption.” As the rule stands right now, if an employee earns more than $23,000, they must be paid overtime unless they are eligible for one of these so-called white collar exemptions. These white collar professionals, such as lawyers or accountants, are exempt from the rule. However, Bray says the exemption that’s most commonly used is what’s called the administrative exemption. “This is someone who basically uses some form of independent discretion when making decisions that are important to the company,” he says. “A lot of people fall into this category, and the problem is many Bray believes if the new overtime rule goes into effect, many pest management companies won’t be able to offer the same employee flexibility they’ve provided in the past.
of these people might think they have the white collar exemption, so it won’t affect them. Well it doesn’t affect them right now, but it will if this proposed rule goes into effect, there are no exemptions for this rule.” The rule also does not invite comment on these exemptions specifically, which raises concerns that the exemptions could be changed in the final rule.

NPMA has submitted comments to DOL to outline all of these points. Although NPMA initially anticipated a final rule being published by late 2015 or early 2016, the process has been delayed. Bray predicts that the new rule more than likely will be published before the President leaves office in late 2016.

“As representatives of the pest management industry, we see this doing more harm than good,” Bray stresses. Fortunately, NPMA is not alone when it comes to fighting the proposed overtime rule. “We’re working with partners in many other industries. This isn’t just a pesticide industry issue, it’s a labor issue. We’re working with the Chamber of Commerce, retail, agriculture, electronics, manufacturing, hospitality,…, you name it. We’re part of a really large group.”

Other than years of litigation and millions of dollars in legal fees to challenge the regulation, Congressional intervention is the only viable way to stop this trainwreck.

2 Clean Water & NPDES Permits

Enacted in 1972, the Clean Water Act (CWA) gives the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority to regulate all of the “waters of the U.S.,” or WOTUS for short. The “waters of the U.S.” has historically been defined as “navigable” waters, which generally includes interstate waters and territorial seas. In other words, navigable waters means a body of water over which a boat can travel.

“But then the argument was—what kind of boat? A tanker? A canoe?” Bray says. “Can EPA regulate that pond in your yard? So, the Army Corps of Engineers in conjunction with EPA finally released its definition of the WOTUS last summer, and everybody panicked.”

Released on May 27, 2015, the final rule broadly defines WOTUS and expands those waters that fall within the federal government’s regulatory jurisdiction under the CWA. While the rule maintains the historic definition of “navigable” waters, including interstate waters and territorial seas, it adds tributaries and adjacent waters within the WOTUS definition if
they “significantly affect the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of the aforementioned traditional navigable waters.” Tributaries are identified by evidence of flowing water such as a tidemark or bank, while adjacent waters work in conjunction as part of a network with other waters, such as wetlands, ponds and lakes.

“It was what a lot of people believed to be very extensive and expansive,” Bray explains. “It was really concerning folks in our industry, but more so in the agricultural industry such as farmers. There was a question about a gulley or a ditch. When that fills up with water, if that water then leads to a stream and that stream leads to a creek and a river, well now you have a waters of the U.S. We thought this rule was going to get rid of that, but there’s a compelling argument to say they didn’t—and they actually expanded it.”

The rule undoubtedly expands the definition of WOTUS which in turn magnifies regulatory oversight and burdens for many businesses. However, NPMA does not anticipate the final rule will have a significant impact on pest management professionals.

Even so, the expanded WOTUS definition raises another issue for pest management companies. Currently, pest management professionals who apply even small amounts of residual pesticides in and around lakes, rivers and streams (WOTUS to combat mosquitoes and other flying insects are required to obtain an additional National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Yet, NPMA believes these permits are unnecessary and redundant. That’s because under the federal pesticide law (FIFRA), all pesticides are already reviewed and regulated—including a thorough review of impacts to water quality and aquatic species—with strict instructions on EPA-approved product labels.

“We have to follow FIFRA labels, and on the label it would say if you can apply to water or not,” Bray explains. “However, the Supreme Court ruled that any time a pesticide was being dispersed into a WOTUS than they needed to have a NPDES permit.” EPA has delegated NPDES authority to the states, and currently 46 of the 50 states regulate NPDES permits. If a pest management professional applies pesticides to more than 6400 acres of a WOTUS, they’re required to have a NPDES permit.

If a pest management professional applies pesticides to more than 6400 acres of a WOTUS, they’re required to have a NPDES permit.

“Our problem is that most of the states require a nominal fee and paperwork and some really burdensome stuff that is 100% unnecessary because the FIFRA label we follow already determines whether it can go in a water or not,” Bray remarks.

He says NPMA is aggressively pushing and supporting legislation up on Capitol Hill related to the NPDES permit issue. “There’s legislation that just passed the Senate to get rid of the WOTUS definition, but the President is probably not going to sign that,” Bray says. However, NPMA remains optimistic about legislation to get rid of NPDES permits, which is running separate from the WOTUS legislation. “The President hasn’t come out and said he would veto against something like that if it did pass,” Bray says. “EPA was even against these NPDES permits when this case went to the Supreme Court. It’s just another layer of red tape that’s very duplicative and burdensome. So we’re continuing to push that. This is one of our most important bills that’s in the Senate right now.”

3 Pollinators

In 2006, beekeepers across the nation started reporting higher-than-usual colony losses, which have been defined as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). The value of insect pollination to U.S. agricultural production has been estimated at $16 billion annually, and about three-fourths of this value is attributable to honey bees. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates of overwinter bee colony losses have averaged more than 30 percent annually in recent years.

While there is no known cause for CCD, many people unjustifiably place the blame on pesticides—particularly the neonicotinoid insecticides used extensively both in agriculture and structural pest control. However, experts say there is simply not enough evidence to prove these pesticides are the primary cause for bee loss. According to a February 9, 2015 Congressional Research Service report entitled, Bee Health: The Role of Pesticides, “The
Because NPMA understands the importance pollinators, particularly honey bees, play in the U.S. food supply chain, pollinator protection has been one of the association’s top priorities for the past two years.

Precise reasons for honey bee loss are unknown.” To top it off, a 2013 joint USDA and EPA report found the varroa mite is the “most detrimental pest of honeybees.”

Because NPMA understands the importance pollinators, particularly honey bees, play in the U.S. food supply chain, pollinator protection has been one of the association’s top priorities for the past two years. NPMA developed pollinator focused resources for both the public and industry including industry approved Best Management Practices (BMPs) for structural applications.

In May 2015 the White House Pollinator Task Force released its 58-page plan entitled “National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators.” In the plan, the EPA highlighted the importance of pesticides for the protection of food supplies and human health. The plan also underscored the importance of balancing these benefits with risks by separating beneficial pollinators and pesticides in time and space.

EPA will soon propose binding language to the labels of 1,500 pesticide products aimed at reducing exposure to managed honey bees and other pollinators. While the label language is expected to be restrictive, it will provide flexibility to pesticide applicators in states that develop and implement state pollinator protection plans.

“This was the number one issue this time last year, and I think our public policy team had the foresight to get out in front of this early and we’ve done a great job educating regulators and advocating for our industry.” Bray says. “We think the federal and state regulators understand our unique position and role in protecting both humans and pollinators. The use patterns for structural pest management professionals very rarely affect pollinators. In addition, there’s a multitude of problems with pollinators, and pointing to pesticides alone is not a realistic answer nor is it based on sound science.”

According to the White House strategy, each state must develop managed pollinator protection plans (referred to as MP3s), and some states already have plans in place. “At this point, we want to continue to work closely with all the states as they make these plans,” Bray says. “We’re pushing our BMPs, which highlight what we as an industry do and train our professionals on how to safely apply pesticides and not disrupt pollinator patterns. So we hope the states are adopting our plans, and once they begin implementing these plans, communication will be a huge part of this.”

Bray adds that NPMA is trying to be as involved as possible when it comes to making and implementing these plans. “One of our concerns is if these plans actually don’t get implemented or if they are implemented but not successful, then there’s a chance EPA comes back and puts much more stringent regulations in place,” he warns. Fortunately, he says NPMA has made some great headway on this issue. “People here at NPMA have been working really hard
on this and a lot of our members have been working with their state regulators.”

**Get Involved**

All of these regulations, proposals, bills and rules could ultimately have a major impact on every pest management business in the U.S. That’s exactly why it’s important for pest management professionals not only to stay in the know—but also to join the effort. Fortunately, there are numerous ways pest management professionals can get involved. “We encourage everyone to sign up for our Friday public policy email,” Bray suggests. “We also have a voter voice grassroots tool, where we send out alerts for our members to send out things to their representatives. It’s very easy because we write a form letter and they just have to type their name in it and hit send.”

However, the most effective way to bring about change is to put in some face-time with your state representatives and develop relationships with them. “That’s what we’re doing on Legislative Day,” Bray says. “When relationships are built on Capitol Hill, it’s even more effective when our members leave Washington DC after having these great conversations, go back home and talk to their representatives in district offices,” he adds. “It’s important to continue the conversation on that side while our public policy team pushes things up here on Capitol Hill. That’s how we bring everything together full circle.”

Amy Bell is a regular contributor to PestWorld magazine. She can be reached at amy@writepunch.com.
Technology can help a business operate more efficiently, enhance a customer’s experience and/or scale for growth. Considering that keeping up with technology trends is becoming increasingly more important, cloud based computing and remote access to business data has truly ushered in a new era in office management for pest management professionals.

The advancement of cloud based software solutions in the pest management industry has opened the doors for outsourcing many of the duties usually handled by internal office staff. Specifically, outsourcing certain day to day functions to a trusted call center can positively impact a small business in more ways than one.

Call Centers Can Answer Your Phones 24/7/365
Yes, it’s true! Imagine if a potential client had the opportunity to contact you at 3:00 am to schedule an appointment for later that day during normal business hours. This is done by simply training the trainer. Once a call center is trained on how your business operates for handling phone calls and scheduling in your cloud based software, they are then able to take on a huge percentage of your inbound calls and scheduling.

How Much Does It Cost?
Although it sounds expensive to have a call center answer phones and schedule services for your business 24 hours a day, it doesn’t have to be. On average you can expect to pay between 69 to 99 cents per minute. Money saving comes in knowing that this is only for the time that they are actually on the phone. To put this in perspective, small businesses spend a minimal amount of time answering phones if you think about it from a cumulative perspective. With this method, small businesses are able to save time and money by outsourcing their calls to a call center whose sole purpose is to do just that: answer calls.

What Are the Advantages of Outsourcing Inbound Calls?
Think for a moment, what would you do with the time saved if you or your staff did not have to answer the phones and respond to messages all day?

Save Money on Training Staff
If you are successful at training a call center to manage answering your phones and scheduling your services, you will never have to train again. It is now the responsibility of the call center to train the people they staff to answer your calls and carry out the same if not a higher level of customer service than you yourself would provide to your customers.
They Can Handle Monthly Routing
Monthly routing can take up a lot of an office administrators time. Depending on the software you use to operate your business, call center staff can build routes for the month and handle customer notifications based on your desired level of communication.

Enhanced Customer Experience
For a personal touch, call centers can provide client notification services on the evening before your high-valued appointments. They have the ability to follow-up after services to ensure customer satisfaction and report back to you with their results.

They adapt quickly to schedule changes.
Often times clients reschedule their appointments which has an impact on the route value for the day. call centers can respond by back filling that lost revenue with protocols that you set in place.

They can collect payments.
You can elect for key supervisorial personnel to be able to collect a payment on an account when necessary. If someone calls in with a balance on their account, the call can be routed to authorized personnel to appropriately engage in the opportunity to collect.

If you are successful at training a call center to manage answering your phones and scheduling your services, you will never have to train again.

They can respond to online service requests.
If you have a service request form on your website, a call center can respond to those requests almost immediately. They can either respond via email per your specifications or contact the client by the provided phone number.

Moreover, engaging with a call center to manage any aspects of your business requires a high degree of trust. Remember that they will be the first point of contact from most of your new customers as well as serve as gatekeepers. Conduct your due diligence wisely and make sure that the call center that you choose to perform some of your business functions is a good fit. When done correctly, this process can be very rewarding.

NPMA Board Member Cleveland Dixon is presenting at PesTech15, January 5–7 in San Jose, California.
"I’ll be honest with you Bill...we’ve got some serious cultural problems. It’s really weird when I walk through the manufacturing plant with our HSE Manager. You can see people scurrying to put their safety glasses and PPE on as they see us approach, only to remove it once we are safely “out of range”, Ann, a safety professional lamented to me. "I feel like a safety cop" she concluded.

Does this scenario sound familiar to you? I’m sure it does.

It plays out exactly the same way, billions of times a day, as people modify their behavior when the boss, the safety manager, or the local police officer come into view. After pondering her problem for a few moments, I told Ann that the behavior she was reporting to me was perfectly logical, and completely predictable.

"How can that be?" she asked me.

"If you’ll tell me how your incentive system works, I’ll bet we can figure it out together. " I replied.

Ann went on to explain that the incentive program she inherited was a classic lagging indicator incentive system. It rewarded $50 cash every month that there was no OSHA recordable injury (red flag!) and another $50 cash every month that there was no safety rule violation observed by Ann’s HSE manager during plant safety audits.

Even more interesting was the fact that the goal was obtained less than 50% of the time...so on average, every month one of the two goals would not be met (that means that every month their management system punished every employee at least one time). How’s that for a morale booster?

“Our goal was to get employees to look out for each other and correct unsafe behavior in the moment of choice when nobody else was looking.”

But sadly, their program failed, as punishment based safety programs always do. Why?

Well, first off, the reward for having no recordable injury produced what we all know it produces: injury hiding. It’s not rocket science.

Next, the incentive to get workers to look out for each other and correct unsafe behaviors totally backfired as employees learned to simply alert each other that the “Safety Cop” was coming so they could quickly put on PPE until the Safety Cop was gone, and thereby not lose their $50 bonus. Apparently the employees became more interested in “spotting the safety cop” than in focusing on improving safety. In the world of human behavior, you get what you reward folks.

As Deming says, Ann’s plant had a “perfect design to produce the results” they got—injury hiding and a safety cop culture. They made every mistake possible in their mis-guided attempts at behavior change.

To help us understand how to solve Ann’s problem, I’d like to talk about today’s workforce, and what I call the “three flavors of employee engagement”. Employee engagement has been identified by Gallup and Towers Perrin as a key driver of your company’s profitability and human performance. Sadly, only 15% of workers score as being “actively engaged” (the equivalent of Commitment, below).

When it comes to engagement, every company has just three kinds of workers: Non-Compliant, Compliant, and Committed.

Non-Compliant: “I will not follow your safety and quality rules, because I am convinced the only way to get high production is to take risks and shortcuts.”

Compliant: “I will follow your safety and quality procedures, as long as someone (a manager, a supervisor, or a peer observer) is standing there watching me. But when that person leaves, I’ll take more risks and shortcuts.”

Committed: “I will follow the safety and quality procedures in the moment of choice, when nobody is watching. This is who I am......”

Where do you want your culture at?
The answer is obvious. We want every single employee to be committed.

Realistically, with turnover, downsizing, and the stressful demands of doing more with less, we are always going to have a segment of our workforce who are not committed to safety. The message they’ve gotten from the leadership team is that production is more important than safety. (Why and how that occurs is fascinating, and I’ll comment about that in a future article “He did WHAT?? Decoding Mixed Messages from Management About Safety.”)

So, the million dollar question is this: “How do you get your Non-Compliant and Compliant employees to move to being Committed to safety, “in the moment of choice, when nobody is watching”?

The method of choice for over 95% of companies today is the same one that Ann’s plant uses. I call it “Leave Alone/ZAP!” It is the default method of management around the world today, and almost every safety manager and supervisor have used it, usually without being aware they are doing it.

Have you ever walked past a group of employees doing everything safely (and said nothing to them) but you went immediately to the first employee doing something wrong and you said something? If you answer yes, then you have just engaged in Leave Alone/Zap.

Does this management method work? Yes it does, for a very, very short time.

You can watch it work today as you drive home, when you will probably be driving about 10 miles an hour over the speed limit, along with everyone else in the pack of cars. At this point, you are all non-compliant, until you see the police officer pointing his radar gun at you.

What do you (and everyone else) do so as to avoid being “Zapped” with a speeding ticket? You hit the brakes. You (and the entire pack of cars) have just graduated to being compliant with the rules that the police want you to follow, at least for a while.

How long does this shift in behavior last? About 30 seconds, when you breathe a sigh of relief as the police officer disappears from your rearview mirror. Whew!

Now what do you do? For most of us, we hit the gas pedal and speed back up, and once again, we become non-compliant.

From this short example, it is clear that punishment, negative reinforcement and “leave alone/Zap” management systems fail to produce commitment, and they fail to change worker behavior “in the moment of choice, when nobody is watching.”

There are a lot of problems with Ann’s poorly developed incentive system, but the biggest is that it relies on Leave Alone/Zap. This is precisely why she is getting the “safety cop” behavior shift outlined in her quote at the beginning of this story.

So how do you get people to become committed to safety, to do the right thing in the moment of choice?

Is it by increasing the number of safety cops? And having more frequent Zaps? Many managers think so, but they are sadly misguided. More punishment and negative reinforcement will get you more compliance, but it won’t get you commitment.

You can’t punish a team into winning the Super Bowl.

Getting your workforce to be Committed to safety is winning the Super Bowl.

To truly get commitment requires something that is rarely delivered by today’s managers and leaders: Positive Reinforcement.

Let me be clear. I am not talking about steak dinners and handing out giftcards and t-shirts for lagging indicators.

That’s not positive reinforcement. In fact, those types of reinforcement actually erode commitment and encourage non-compliance. In short, they breed mediocrity.

How well are our best behavior based safety cultures doing at delivering the positive reinforcement that people crave and need?

The answer will surprise you (just as it shocked me). Stay tuned for my next story…”The Power of Positive Reinforcement”.

The End… «

Bill Sims, Jr., is President of The Bill Sims Company, Inc. For more than 40 years, the Bill Sims Company has created positive reinforcement systems that have helped large and small firms to inspire better performance from employees and increase bottom line profits. He is a world renowned keynote speaker and also conducts leadership workshops globally.

Bill’s first book, entitled Green Beans & Ice Cream—The Remarkable Power of Positive Reinforcement, has garnered rave reviews. He has built more than 1,000 recognition programs at firms including Dupont, Siemens VDO, Coca-Cola, and Disney, to name a few. Visit www.greenbeanbook.com to learn more.
Every week we learn about new features being unveiled on our favorite social media apps, and we quickly try to discern how these changes will ultimately affect how we will function or use these new bells and whistles to communicate with consumer audiences. As marketers, our Twitter feeds are bombarded with these updates and we scramble to learn more and keep the pace in this fast-moving world.

2015 brought big changes to the way companies or brands operate and market themselves on social media. Instagram made in-app advertising available to select brands and then to the masses; Facebook changed the newsfeed experience with autoplay video and launched universal search; Twitter launched Moments; and live streamed video took on a life of its own with Meerkat, Periscope and, most recently, limited celebrity live-stream video via Facebook. And, I’m sure by the time this article goes to print there will have been a dozen more major updates and new features announced within this space.

We already know 2016 is poised to be another game changing and empowering year for brands, and I hope you’re one of them—ready to take on social media with new fervor. To help you break through the clutter, here are a few developments we’re most excited about in the New Year.

1) Express Yourself
Facebook users rejoiced when the social juggernaut hinted they would finally be adding a dislike button to the platform. Then, they lost their minds when Facebook unveiled it would be taking things a step further with “Reactions,” a new feature that gives users a wider choice of emotions to share. TechCrunch reported the new set of six emoji, currently being beta tested in Ireland and Spain, will sit next to the original thumbs-up Like button and will allow users to quickly respond to posts with love, laughter, happiness, sadness, shock and even anger.

Not to be outdone, Twitter also announced a change from its star icon to tag Favorite tweets to a heart icon to denote Likes. The change was met with mixed reviews but Twitter defended the action, saying, “The heart, in contrast, is a universal symbol that resonates across languages, cultures, and time zones. The heart is more expressive, enabling you to convey a range of emotions and easily connect with people. And in our tests, we found people loved it.”

Consumers will likely embrace the opportunity to more accurately share their emotional connection with a piece of content, and brands will have a far more accurate read on consumer sentiment, seeing what resonates and what falls flat, and can adjust messages accordingly.

2) If You Build It, They Will Come
“They” being the brands, are salivating for more chances to sponsor posts and convert sales on
widely used social media apps like Instagram and Pinterest. As social apps roll out new advertising offerings, brands are lining up to test these new capabilities. Instagram opened up advertising to all businesses in the 4th quarter last year and saw incredible demand and success, particularly with e-commerce, travel, retail, and entertainment clients. But what’s most impressive is the general brand awareness Instagram ads were able to achieve in initial tests—97% of measured campaigns saw significant lift in brand recall.

And, as most people access social apps on their smartphone, mobile e-commerce will likely experience a surge as more platforms build “get it now” features. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter have already entered the game. In an interview with CNBC, Nathan Hubbard, Twitter’s head of commerce said, “More than 50 million tweets a month say ‘I want’ or ‘I need’ something. Plus, over 100 million people follow a brand or a merchant on Twitter.” Hubbard also predicts billions of dollars in e-commerce transactions will move into apps.

As consumers become more and more comfortable with taking immediate action on social media to buy now, subscribe now or schedule now, there’s no telling how it will affect a service industry such as ours. Keep evaluating opportunities and don’t be afraid to test an ad spend on one of these platforms in 2016. And, if you haven’t already read, “The Thumb is in Charge,” by Facebook IQ, please take a few minutes to learn even more great insights.

3) Stay With Me
Pop crooner, Sam Smith, won the 2015 Grammy for record of the year with ‘Stay With Me.’ Now, imagine that is the theme song for Facebook in 2016 as they make big moves to keep users in-app for everything…forever. The company already made strides with videos posted directly to the site’s servers and in-app messaging, but it doesn’t end there. Soon, the days of jumping off-site to a third party news source to read a story will go by the wayside, with the launch of Instant Articles.

Last summer, it was revealed that Facebook drove more traffic to news sites than Google. More than Google! To further rule the world, Facebook began working with select publishers to host versions of news articles on its own servers, claiming faster load time as the main benefit to users and ultimately the news source, allowing more people to reach and consume their content. With some fancy ways of sharing ad revenue, news sites are coming on board and users are able to stay in Facebook to consume their news and increase the duration of time spent in-app.

How will this evolve? What will this mean for our own content—will we have to post our articles directly to Facebook? Will Facebook become its own news source and a player we pitch in our media relations efforts? Although it’s too soon to tell, we will follow moves like this closely because it could have a major affect not only on how we continue to reach and engage with consumers, but also on how we are able to share content within the platform.

Make a Resolution to Stay In The Know
It’s a New Year and a new opportunity for you to reinvigorate your social media marketing mix. Don’t watch these new features evolve and pass you by—learn what’s new, jump in and find out firsthand how to put these updates to work for you and your business.

Cindy Mannes is the executive director of the Professional Pest Management Alliance (PPMA) and vice president of public affairs for the National Pest Management Association. The PPMA was founded in 1997 to defend, protect and grow the pest control industry. As the voice of the professional pest control industry, PPMA continues to proactively provide the public with information on the value of professional pest control through its media relations, public service announcements, advertising and digital communications programs it conducts in collaboration with the National Pest Management Association. For more information, please contact Cindy at cmannes@pestworld.org.
In the last month I have seen a lot of news stories and social media posts about kissing bugs. It’s gotten to the point where my clients have started asking me what I can do to keep their families safe from kissing bugs. I operate in North Carolina and have read that kissing bugs are found here. Are they really a threat and why am I just hearing about this all of a sudden?

You aren’t the only one that has been bombarded with alarmist kissing bug stories in recent weeks. It’s important to separate the facts from the fiction and remember that sometimes the media sensationalize certain issues. Let’s start with the basics. Kissing bugs, or costenose bugs, are common names for a subfamily of the assassin bugs called Triatominae. Most members of this subfamily do feed on blood and some are capable of transmitting diseases to humans. The most concerning disease that can be transmitted by kissing bugs is called Chagas disease.

The kissing bugs found in the Americas, which are $\frac{1}{2}-1”$ long as adults, are obligate blood-feeders and will feed on a variety of vertebrate animals, including humans. Some of the most important hosts and reservoirs for the pathogen that causes Chagas disease are pack rats, opossums, mice, and armadillos, and kissing bugs are often found in high numbers near where these animals nest.

Kissing bugs feed after dark and tend to choose exposed skin in sensitive areas, like around the lips.
Hence the common name.) Salivary secretions contain an anesthetizing agent and most feeding sessions will last up to 30 minutes. The pathogen is often introduced into the human not during the feeding, but after the kissing bug has left. As they feed, they defecate and their feces containing the disease-causing agent, a protozoan called *Trypanosoma cruzi*, sit on the skin. The classic version of this chain of events is that the person wakes up, scratches are their bite, and physically pushes the feces across the wound and into the body. A surprisingly high number of infected people experience mild symptoms in the weeks following the bite, the acute phase, but remain symptomless carriers for the rest of their lives, the chronic phase. However, 20–30% of people with Chagas disease will experience devastating health problems, including heart issues.

With all that information in mind, the relevant questions remain. Where are kissing bugs found, is their range expanding, and how widespread is Chagas disease? Chagas disease is a huge problem in Central and South America with an estimate of 8–10 million people currently living with Chagas disease. In the United States, the number is much lower, around 300,000, and the vast majority of sufferers acquired Chagas disease elsewhere and then came to the US. In fact, only a handful of locally acquired cases of Chagas disease that originated from kissing bugs (and not from mother to baby or transfusions) have ever been documented in the United States. Less than 40, to be precise.

There are at least 11 species of kissing bugs found in the United States and they are most common in southern states. There has not been any documented increase in the range of North American kissing bugs. Rather, the renewed attention on kissing bugs has stirred up a bunch of old facts and misinterpreted the risks associated with them in the United States.

A recent study from Texas A&M University requested residents in Texas to send in kissing bugs from around their homes and about half of them were determined to carry the Chagas-causing pathogen. So why are there so few cases in the southern US vs. Central and South America?

It can be easy to get caught up in the hysteria surrounding kissing bugs, but approach the issue with an open mind and seek out facts: consult the CDC, WHO, and Universities for even-keeled and reliable information.

One of the biggest differences is that homes in the United States are largely well-constructed and are not desirable harborage sites for kissing bugs, especially compared to hollow trees, rodent burrows, and other available locations outdoors. Kissing bugs are also conspicuous and differ greatly in their approach to blood-feeding than mosquitoes.

The best way to respond to your concerned customers is by being well-informed and communicative. If you can demonstrate that you understand the facts, you can put people at ease and inspire trust that you do indeed know what you are doing. It can be easy to get caught up in the hysteria surrounding kissing bugs, but approach the issue with an open mind and seek out facts: consult the CDC, WHO, and Universities for even-keeled and reliable information.
Information doesn’t tie us down today, and it’s changing the way business works. Most pest companies expect employees to use mobile devices to respond to customers quickly, and keep tabs on the office, but technicians could be even more effective if they had the same resources on site that they have back on the office computer.

While veteran employees came to rely on NPMA’s Field Guide to Structural Pests for identifying a pest or researching a problem, younger technicians needed a portable form of information to take on the road. In fact, whether an employee has twenty years of experience, or has just been on the job for weeks, they benefit from having access to good information. And now it is available thanks to NPMA’s new Field Guide App.

After downloading the Field Guide App for just $4.99 from stores at Google Play or Apple App, buyers will have hundreds of pest photos, biology, behavior and control methods right on their phone or tablet. “This app is just a new format,” according to Jim Fredericks, Vice President, Technical and Regulatory Affairs at NPMA. “We’ve pulled together the same information that’s in our original NPMA Field Guide in a way that’s accessible to modern technicians. It’s a fun, direct way to access information.”

“You can use the app in the ways you used your Field Guide” but there is no need to stop there, said Fredericks. “Our app has a few new features that will make communicating faster and easier. Technicians can also use it to email photos of pests and information directly to clients. Or, if a technician is stumped, they can take a photo on-site and email it directly from the app to NPMA for identification.” Another improvement from past generations of apps is that the new Field Guide App is a “native app” and all of the information is within the device once downloaded. Since it doesn’t pull from anywhere, there is no wait time, making the Field Guide App worthwhile even in low service areas.

Special sections of the Field Guide App are available for adding notes or including company protocols and standard operating procedures. Users can also add their own photos to use as a sales tool when working with clients. And unlike a book that has to be republished to be updated, the Field Guide App will be updated with new information seamlessly every six months or so, keeping the content current.

Most apps are affordable and at just $4.99 the cost of the Field Guide App is no different, however, the price doesn’t reflect the value of the resource. Since the app contains all of the information in the original NPMA Field Guide “it represents a ton of value for just $4.99,” said Fredericks. The price point was selected “so that it would be affordable for every technician at the company” to have the app on a phone or other portable device.

The Field Guide App goes live at Pestech on January 5, 2016 and will be available for purchase by anyone with a need for identifying pests and researching pest problems. Ultimately, according to Fredericks, “our objective is to put it into every pair of hands and change the way technicians work every day.”
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MYTHBUSTERS: FACT OR FICTION ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

BY JEFF FENNER

Pest management professionals know social media must be part of their integrated marketing plans to reach current and prospective customers. Understanding exactly how social media fits in and what social media vehicles are best suited to help PMPs achieve their objectives, however, can prove to be an elusive task.

MYTH: You have to boost your Facebook posts to make them perform better?

FACT: Ninety-nine percent of the time, you have to boost your Facebook posts to make them perform better. Everyone in social media marketing is seeking that one percent—thougt—that unicorn in the social marketing realm, a viral post that generates incredible reach and engagement without any paid support. It definitely happens, but it shouldn’t be counted upon. To meaningfully reach your audience on Facebook, boosting posts is necessary.

Pest control companies, however, don’t need to invest in each and every post they create. Ideally, you should decide which posts are most important to the company, and use your marketing dollars to ensure they have the most significant reach. Also, keep in mind, there is a difference between boosting posts and promoting posts. Traditionally, boosting posts ensure that your fans and their friends see your content; while promoting posts through Facebook’s ad manager gives you more control over the audience you target and price you pay. Although more sophisticated and a bit more work, promoting posts is generally a better strategy.

MYTH: Facebook is a better marketing vehicle for Gen X rather than millennials?

FACT: Facebook, in general, is social media home base. According to Pew Research, more than half of all adults online, regardless of their generation, use more than one social networking site, but Facebook is, by far, the most popular and common. That being said, when we think about social media engagement, Facebook is generally a better channel for reaching Generation X than the millennial audience.

MYTH: Twitter and or Pinterest are better marketing vehicles for millennials

FACT: It depends entirely how we define “better.” Facebook is still the social guerilla, and will command the best reach. Likely, it will also be the cheapest option. However, studies have shown that millennials prefer to spend time on other social networks like Twitter, Pinterest or Instagram—even though they still maintain and check into Facebook regularly.

If a pest control company has relevant content that would resonate on Twitter or Pinterest, those outlets can prove powerful for organic reach and engagement. Pinterest, in particular, can drive an enormous amount of web traffic for companies. There is a definite science to the process though—you need well-written, useful content, beautifully designed pins, a website with a clear call to action and, most importantly, a meaningful way to convert website visitors to customers.

MYTH: No one reads email anymore; social media is the marketing vehicle of the future?

FACT: Statistics show that really good email open rates linger around the 25 percent mark—with click through rates much, much lower. Considering that Facebook is currently limited organic, unpaid views of newsfeed posts to about 10 percent of your audience, I wouldn’t rule email marketing out of the mix without further consideration. I think the marketing vehicle of the future is an integrated, strategic marketing plan that takes all channels into account. As today’s customer becomes increasingly sophisticated and able to tune out marketing messages, today’s marketer needs to respond with hyperlocal, inventive marketing campaigns that deliver on their objectives and utilize all relevant channels.

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