MARCH | APRIL 2016

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QualityPro Hiring Standards

Hiring the right people can save you time, money, and stress in the long run. And if you have a process in place, you can use it to your advantage for marketing and employee retention. The QualityPro standards are our industry’s best practices for professionalism. Meet the following standards for hiring new employees and reap the rewards of having a trustworthy team.

Meeting the QualityPro standards for hiring helps ensure you have the best team possible and puts your company’s hiring practices on par with the most successful companies in our industry. Coworkers and customers alike may feel more secure knowing the process you have in place for new employees. In addition, potential applicants may screen themselves when they find out that your process involves reference checks, a criminal background report, a MVR check, and a pre-employment drug test, saving everyone valuable time.

Driving Diversity

By Amy Bell

Why should pest management companies make diversity and inclusion a priority? The answer is simple: A diverse workforce leads to a more successful business. Studies have shown time and again that businesses with a diverse staff are generally more productive and more creative. To top it off, these diverse companies enjoy lower employee turnover, higher revenue and increased market share.

What You Need to Know When Hiring Technicians

By Jeff Fenner

The service technician or specialist is—for all intents and purposes—the industry’s most prominent face to consumers. They are often the only “real person” a consumer will actually meet when they have pest management services done in their home or business. This is why it is so important for managers and human resource specialists to get it right more times than not when it comes to technician hiring.

Fleet Exposures: The Pest Control Industry’s Hidden Risk

By Gary Shapiro

The pest control industry faces a number of significant risk exposures. While the most obvious ones are tied directly to the core business, such as effective application of product, some of the largest exposures are actually related to fleet operations. And, while improved products and processes have greatly reduced injuries to employees and exposure claims, the average cost of vehicle crashes has dramatically increased.
The Pace of Change

In recent years, NPMA has been faced with the challenge of adapting and changing quickly in order to keep pace with the evolving industry. Through its history, important forces have transformed the way the pest management industry does business. These same influences have been responsible for making us what we are today and will have no small impact tomorrow.

The fact is business is changing again. Whether it’s through new technologies; overreaching regulations; or an aging workforce, it’s NPMA’s responsibility to ensure that our membership has the tools it needs to remain relevant.

As such, NPMA must remain at the forefront of the industry’s evolution, so we can serve effectively as a conduit of information and education to our membership and the industry. Likewise, our committees must continue to work diligently to ensure that our programs and services address the most up-to-the-minute issues affecting your business.

As part of this responsibility, the NPMA, PPMA, and QualityPro Board of Directors, as well as all of our committee chairpersons and key staff members are meeting this May to embark on the next leg of our long-range planning cycle.

Together, we will focus on using every available opportunity to improve service to our membership, thus allowing the organization to be nimble and to respond quickly to the ever-changing business environment.

Having said this, I also realize that not every pest management company, supplier, and distributor is a member. Yet every one of these companies has something of value to contribute to the greater whole. Getting these companies involved in industry issues is imperative to making the industry stronger.

Heightened involvement translates into new ideas, new ways of doing things, and stronger support for our industry. And, while NPMA has robust momentum—especially in the areas of events, public policy, education and technical resources—we have the potential to become a powerhouse if we all come together as an industry. Remember the maxim: None of us is as strong as all of us.

Is this lofty thinking a case of newbie naiveté? I don’t think so. One thing I have learned in my years in this fascinating industry is that the most successful companies are those that accept and embrace change and look for opportunities to progress via business lines, new products, new materials, new technologies and new trends.

And it’s NPMA’s job to help you do just that.

...we have the potential to become a powerhouse if we all come together as an industry. Remember the maxim: None of us is as strong as all of us.
HONORING THE PROFESSIONALS
WHO PROTECT OUR HEALTH, FOOD AND PROPERTY
FROM THE DANGERS OF PESTS

APRIL IS NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT MONTH

For more than 30 years, the National Pest Management Association has designated a special month as an opportunity to recognize the invaluable role professional pest management plays in protecting public health, food and property from the diseases and dangers associated with household pests. During this month-long celebration, the Professional Pest Management Alliance, which serves as the consumer education arm of the NPMA, works to increase awareness of the positive impact professional pest control has in protecting quality of life and empowers pest control companies to recognize and celebrate NPMM in their own communities. For more information, visit www.NPMA Pestworld.org.

To learn more about NPMM and to join other leaders who are working to protect, defend and grow the industry, please contact Cindy Mannes at cmannes@pestworld.org or visit www.NPMA Pestworld.org/PPMA.
Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.” That’s how Malcom Forbes, the late publisher of Forbes magazine, so eloquently described it. Even with such a brilliantly simple definition, many companies have a hard time putting their finger on diversity. To make matters worse, a whopping 41% of managers say they are “too busy” to implement diversity initiatives, according to a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey of Fortune 1000 companies.

Yet our country is becoming more and more diverse by the day. According to U.S. Census data, there will be no racial or ethnic majority by the year 2050. This is one of the many reasons why it’s critical for all businesses—including pest management companies—to promote diversity in their workforce and include employees from all walks of life.

“Companies that are planning to stay competitive in the future are going to have to design and market their products to these new multicultural buyers,” says Vic Charles, vice president of diversity & inclusion for ServiceMaster and chairman of the NPMA Diversity Committee. “If you don’t have a good understanding of them, you’re not going to be able to market your services to them.”

Vic Charles knows the pest control industry inside-and-out, and he’s seen firsthand how pest management companies can benefit from diversity. He started his career more than 30 years ago as a pest control technician in the Chicagoland market. He went on to run branches and worked as a regional manager and a sales manager. He worked his way up to Vice President of Human Resources for Terminix and held that position for more than 10 years. Two years ago, Charles took on his current role as VP of Diversity & Inclusion.
with ServiceMaster, and soon after he became Chairman of the NPMA Diversity Committee.

Established in 2013, the NPMA Diversity Committee was created to educate members about the benefits of diversity and provide tools and resources for pest management companies to drive diversity within their organizations. “Each of our committee members has a different background and approach to how we influence diversity and inclusion in NPMA,” Charles explains. “We have a really strong committee and we get a lot of support from NPMA.”

As the nation’s demographics continue to shift, Charles says it’s more important than ever for NPMA members to build a diverse workforce. “This is very significant in today’s times. In any business, we’re dealing with ever-changing trends in the demography of our markets, including our employees, our customers and our community,” he remarks. “We all realize the demographics are changing, and we have to embrace those changes and understand differences and similarities.”

Awesome Advantages
Why should pest management companies make diversity and inclusion a priority? The answer is simple: A diverse workforce leads to a more successful business. Studies have shown time and again that diverse companies enjoy lower employee turnover, higher revenue and increased market share.

When you diversify your workforce, you’ll reap the following rewards:

1 Attract More Customers
When you think about it, it makes perfect sense: A pest management company with a highly diverse staff has the capability to understand and target a larger, more diverse customer base. “A service company that understands what their customers need and what their culture is, they’re probably going to make better strides in that market,” points out Charles. “Understand your potential and existing customer base so you’re able to serve them better.”

2 Increase Recruiting Power
A diverse staff can also increase your chances of recruiting new talent. According to a GlassDoor survey, two-thirds of the polled workers said diversity was important to them when evaluating companies and job offers.

3 Boost Productivity, Creativity & Revenue
Numerous studies have shown that diverse workforces are more productive than homogenous teams. Of course, higher productivity generally leads to increased revenue.

Perhaps that’s why for every 1% increase in the rate of gender diversity of a workforce, there is a 3% rise in sales revenue, according to the American Sociological Association. And for every 1% rise in the rate a workforce’s ethnic diversity, there company sees a 9% boost in sales revenue.

While impressive, these stats shouldn’t be all that surprising. After all, diverse businesses enjoy a wider range of perspectives. This adds to the collective
knowledge of the team and allows the company to target a larger audience of customers.

“When you have a diverse workforce, and you have collaboration amongst different and unique people, you have a better chance for greater creativity and increased productivity,” says Charles. “A group with different backgrounds, experiences, different job roles and cultures are typically going to give you a better solution—because now you’ve got different opinions, you have all those experiences and different things that come into play that help you better understand what it is you’re trying to accomplish.” Which leads us to the next reward…

4 Gain a Panoramic View

With a range of different perspectives at your disposal, you’ll have the power and knowledge to make smarter decisions and design more effective products and services. “Ultimately, as you think about differences or similarities, they’re really what make your company perform at a higher level,” Charles explains. “When you think about the differences like the education people have had, what people have been exposed to during the course of their lifetime—you put all that together as an organization or company, and it really helps you produce a better product because you’re looking at it from different views rather than just one view.”

For every business, collaboration is a key component to any major decision-making process. Yet if you collaborate only with associates and employees who have the same experiences, backgrounds and opinions as yourself, you probably won’t get very far. For example, let’s say you’re looking to expand your pest control company. As you begin to make decisions and develop your plans for the future, you could benefit greatly from collaborating with a diverse team who can offer fresh ideas you may have never imagined.

“Having more people involved and helping you take a look at what lies ahead will make you a better company,” says Charles. “If you put people in a room, and they all come from different walks of life and all have different experiences, they’re going to give you some great answers and give you a better product. If you have everybody from the same walk of life with the same experiences, you’re going to have just one answer.”

Diversity Education 101

Considering all the studies and statistics, it seems obvious that a diverse workforce can offer boundless benefits to your pest management company. So how do you go about promoting diversity in your workplace?

Charles says when it comes to driving diversity, you can’t just talk the talk; you have to walk the walk.

“It’s more about influencing the culture,” he explains. “If you really want to drive diversity, then the leaders and owners of your organization have to model it. Because people see what you do, and what you do is the best way to influence what people think about it.”

He adds that diversity is not a difficult concept to grasp. “Diversity is really simple: It’s understanding different cultures, taking a look at what those cultures are and embracing them,” he says. “Take a look at the things you’re doing. Are they right? Do they feel right? If they don’t feel right, don’t do them.”

If you’re not sure where to begin with diversity education, Charles says you can certainly tap into training programs or hire consultants to come in and teach your staff about diversity and inclusion. However, there are plenty of quick, easy and affordable ways to educate your staff about diversity, as well.

“I like to keep things simple because every business doesn’t have time to do five-week training sessions,” Charles explains. “You can go out and spend numerous dollars in training people on diversity—but there are things you can do of a smaller nature that will help you do it.”

For example, try some team-building diversity exercises with your staff. “There are a lot of good exercises that are quick examples of diversity, and those things are easy to help people understand,” he says. “If you have people do an exercise that depicts what diversity and inclusion is, then they’re going to remember that a lot more than you just telling them what diversity is.” You can find many of these diversity exercises online with a simple Google search.

Charles also suggests hitting the books. “Do some reading,” he says. “There are some books on diversity that are 95 pages that won’t take long to read, but it gives you more insight.”

When it comes to promoting diversity in the workplace, Charles says the most important thing is to accept the differences between your staff members. “Value the differences and the similarities of all your associates or employees,” he emphasizes. “Each one of them brings something of value to the table, and we really need to take the time to listen and hear what they have to offer.”

Amy Bell is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor to PestWorld. She can be reached at amy@writepunch.com.
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

When Hiring Technicians
According to a survey from the Society for Human Resource Management, 18 percent of service-sector human resource professionals indicated they had more difficulty filling key positions in the first month of 2016—up nearly four percent from the same time last year.

What does this mean for pest management professionals looking to hire qualified service technicians? Is the pool of qualified candidates not as deep as anticipated or are industry standards rising to meet the changing demands of the position?

In either case it reinforces the importance of having proven protocols in place for hiring and being deliberate about the process from start to finish. The costs associated with failed hires are significant to a company—regardless of its size.

The service technician or specialist is for all intents purposes the industry’s most prominent face to consumers. They are often the only “real person” a consumer will actually meet when they have pest management services done in their home or business.

This is another reason why it is important for managers and human resource specialists to get it right more times than not when it comes to technician hiring.

Adam Vannest, director of training and technical services for Northwest Exterminating in Atlanta, says the company considers a variety of factors before extending an offer.

“The demands of the position continue to evolve and as a result so does the skill set we look for in technicians,” says Vannest. “We are looking for individuals who can be trained in multiple skill sets to adapt to the changing role they have to play.”

Northwest knows it has a responsibility to hire technicians who are not only proficient at the job but who are reliable, personable and project a professional image. “We are putting technicians in customers’ homes every day so it is important that we hire people who are confident, capable and connect with our customers,” adds Vannest.

Vannest shared the 10 point checklist he uses when interviewing prospective technicians to see if they not only can do the job but how they will mesh with Northwest’s family-oriented culture where the emphasis is on lifelong learning and a sincere commitment to customers.

1. **Character**
What are the candidate’s core moral and ethical character traits? Can the company trust the technician to represent it in the field and take care of their customers? Northwest provides employees with classroom and one-on-one character building training to help them build character and how to overcome their fears to be the best they can be.

2. **Are They A Cultural Fit?**
Will the person fit into Northwest’s culture? Vannest usually gets a sense during the first interview whether or not the person will blend into the company’s family culture. “You can’t fit a square peg into round hole,” says Vannest.

3. **Being A Genuine Servant Leader**
At Northwest is it important that employees genuinely care about their co-workers, customers and community. They need to be true servant leaders that focus on the needs of others, especially team members, before they consider their own.

4. **Overall Attitude**
Attitude is one thing a person can control and Vannest looks for technicians that are not influenced by outside factors and who are able to present a positive attitude to co-workers and customers.

5. **Communication Skills**
Today’s technician must be able to effectively communicate with customers face-to-face, over the phone or through emails and texts. Vannest does a lot of coaching with technicians on how to leave a positive impression with customers before, during and after a service call through good communication.
“Millennials are very on-demand and interactive in their learning and will want to know why it is important to know something.” —Vannest

Legal Requirements
Northwest looks to hire responsible people who will take care of their service vehicles and equipment. They also want safe drivers and will review driving records before hiring and require annual driver safety training. Northwest also performs pre-hiring drug testing and random drug testing post-hire.

Skill Assessment
Can the aspiring technician handle what is expected of them both in being proficient in pest management techniques as well as the physical demands of the job? Can they wear a respirator, can they lift a certain weight and do they have a fear of heights or enclosed spaces?

Self-Image
Does the person present a professional appearance and care about themselves as well as others? Vannest looks for technicians that present themselves in a consistent manner in how they dress, communicate and interact with others.

Technology Proficient
It isn’t as much a generational or capability issue as it is a willingness to learn and adapt to the technology advances (i.e. hand held devices, texting customers, etc.) that are available. Northwest looks for candidates who are willing to use technology to their advantage.

Ambition to Grow
Technicians (or any employee for that matter) who don the Northwest uniform must be willing to grow and be lifelong learners. Northwest is a strong believer in promoting from within and looks for people who want to further their skills and career and don’t view their position as “just a job.” Vannest says they challenge technicians to be the best they can be and encourage growth.

Experience vs. Enthusiasm
There is a belief by some in the industry that it is easier to hire an enthusiastic candidate who are new to the industry rather than bring in an experienced technician that you might have to “break” of his or her bad habits.

While each company views and values experience differently, Vannest says it depends on the position they are applying for and the individual.

“There is an advantage with someone that is new to the industry,” says Vannest. “We can show them our way of doing things, how to use our equipment and educate them on our approach to pest management.”

Vannest says Northwest has seen faster onboarding process and a higher level of success with general pest control technicians that are new to the industry and have learned the company’s way from the start.

On the flip side Vannest says experience speaks volumes when it comes to hiring technicians in specialized fields including bird control, wildlife management or commercial services.

“If you are looking for a service specialist to handle a food processing or other sensitive account you will look for someone with experience who knows the particulars of those environments and can hit the ground running,” says Vannest.

The Next Generation of Service Technician
When asked what the next generation of service technicians will look like, Vannest feels they will have a more expansive educational background and demand a different approach to training.

“Millennials are very on-demand and interactive in their learning and will want to know why it is important to know something,” says Vannest.

The new breed of technician will also be more of a consultant to their clients in Vannest’s estimation.

“They will be less about bait stations and applications and more about prevention,” says Vannest.

“They will be tasked with achieving results by using less product and will rely more heavily on technology to connect with clients and solve problems.”

Jeff Fenner is a partner at B Communications. He can be reached at jfenner@b-communications.com.
The recent PestTech conference had many great, informative discussions that were designed to help our industry rally around the opportunities and challenges that technology brings to our businesses. One topic included a panel of speakers all talking about disruptive technology in the pest control industry.

Disruptive technology is defined as an innovation that creates a new market by applying a different set of values, which ultimately (and unexpectedly) overtakes an existing market. Netflix changed and ultimately took over the movie rental industry...Blockbuster Who!? Why would anyone call for a taxi when a cleaner, quicker, and maybe safer alternative is just a click away from their mobile device with Uber? Anyone remember Kodak? Kodak was a company that was founded in the year 1888, was over 100-years-old and failed to see a disruptive technology and adapt. Digital cameras and mobile printing apps rendered Kodak irrelevant and put them into bankruptcy. So, how do we as an industry start looking for and identifying these disruptive technologies before they change our core business?

Apple, Amazon, and Google are investing resources into technologies that will deliver home services to consumers through home monitoring devices and apps. Even Facebook will be a key player in the game with CEO and Founder Mark Zuckerberg saying that his New Years resolution is to create an artificial intelligence system that can be your personal assistant, running your home like Jarvis of the Iron Man movies. While I’m excited to be able to say “Jarvis, please schedule a company to clean my gutters” and have my home take care of coordinating its own maintenance needs...when I consider this technology and how it will impact my pest control business—or any other service provider for that matter—I see a disruptive technology. How will this technology find companies and choose brands for its home? We rely on online searches, friend referrals, etc., for lead flow. This initial interaction is an area that could have the biggest disruption—an impact on our customer supply chain.

Home technologies and devices are becoming more accessible and affordable, and, of course, more convenient for our customers. Right now you are able to set a geo fence around your home that will sense your proximity so that by the time you get home your lights are on, your air set to a comfortable level, door unlocked, and so on. And you can do all this with plug-in devices that cost less than $500. Home devices and technologies will soon become intelligent enough to distinguish between family members and guests within physical spaces and adapt to individual needs based on biometrics like fingerprints, body temperatures and even the rhythm of our own heartbeats. This will not only make home life more automated and convenient, but also more efficient as it monitors your home’s health. If monitoring devices and smart apps can do all that—why wouldn’t it also tell you if there was a rodent problem in the attic and easily replace a technician’s onsite inspection of a home?

Wouldn’t Google, or any of the other brands I mentioned earlier, send the home owner an alert letting them know that they have already scheduled a pest control company to come out and take care of the problem? Then, when the technician arrived the system could tell—or better yet show—him or her where it has been noticing the rodent activity. This system could take over handling calls, scheduling and dispatch. Imagine the impact on our business if we don’t readily adapt for that type of consumer. This isn’t just a pest control industry issue—this is a service industry issue as the same thing will take place with plumbers, electricians etc.

The more we, as an industry, can adapt and embrace the opportunities that new technology creates for us, the better we can help mold and manage these opportunities for our benefit.
STANDING OUT IN A SEA OF SOCIAL MEDIA NOISE

Is your business active on social media? If you’re not, you and your business are most likely missing out. Every day, the conversation grows and gets louder as more people sign up and engage on various social media platforms. Social media provides a tremendous opportunity for companies to grow their business as consumers connect and engage with their favorite brands. However, this ever-increasing volume of traffic makes it that much harder for each post, message, tweet or pin you post to stand out.

But don’t give up.

Building your social media presence takes time—and making sure you do it in a way that provides value to your business is important. As a busy pest management professional, it can be difficult to find the time needed to maintain your social pages. To ensure you are spending your valuable time making a worthwhile impact on social media, there are several strategies you can implement to ensure success.

Provide Value
Successful social media pages act in an almost human-like way. They share informative, instructional and advice driven content, while also infusing personality with good humored or funny posts. They respond to questions and service issues. They have a distinct voice. Providing and showing value to a user on social media is essential to growing and engaging with fans and followers. Three quick ways to add value to your social content include:

- Provide short snippets of “how to” related content. This will show your followers and customers that you are willing to help them with any and every pest management need.
- Become an educator. Share information on seasonal pest problems and pest related news, warnings or alerts. For example, come mosquito season, offer tips on how to prevent mosquito bites and eliminate breeding grounds from the yard. This content will be especially helpful as concern grows over Zika virus.
- Share interesting pest facts. As a pest control professional, you have probably heard it all when it comes to the questions customers may have when it comes to pests in their homes. Consider sharing some of these common questions, as well as some “why” questions. Consider posting these answers in more of a “did you know” format, utilizing hashtag #didyouknow or #dyk.

The biggest disservice you can do is to treat your social media accounts as a way to push out too much irrelevant—or self-serving—information. For example, if you only post about deals and continually promote specific services to followers, they may turn off notifications or unsubscribe to your page. Adding value to your follower’s social media experience gives them a reason to stop and read the messages you post on social media, and allows for greater engagement.

Be Engaging
Social media is the perfect venue to showcase your company as an active community member, instead of a passive observer. Engaging with your fans and followers allows you to form a connection and helps to build trust. It also helps to boost your organic reach on Facebook and appear in fans’ newsfeeds.

Oftentimes, social media is used as a platform for consumers to ask questions or pose complaints. While this may seem scary, it provides you with a wonderful opportunity to showcase how invested you are in your customers. It is important to respond to questions and complaints publically and in a timely manner. If the conversation requires a more personal level of response, request they reach out to you directly, or direct message you. Direct message is best used when customer questions or complaints require you discuss details specific to their unique situation.

Not only is it important to respond to customers on social media, it is also important to start a conversation with them. Pose questions that would be compelling for customers to answer and have a conversation with them in the reply. This shows your followers that you are...
interested in their thoughts and hearing what they have to say. It also makes you more relatable as a company.

**Tell Your Story with Visuals**
Images catch our attention, keep our attention and are understood faster than text. Because of this, it is important to have a strong digital or visual identity on social media. Take photos that apply to pest management and share them with your followers in an interesting way. Avoid graphic images, and instead focus on images that can educate followers. Teach them about pests and how to get rid of them. Tell them about bugs that are beneficial to our environment and talk about seasonal or regional pests.

**Be Patient**
Your social media platforms won’t grow overnight. It takes time, energy and patience to grow them into thoughtful, engaging sites. Your time is valuable, and oftentimes, social media can fall to the backburner in terms of importance. If you can reserve some time each day to engage with followers and showcase your personality, you will have a more interactive following and thoughtful site.

**Spend a Little Money**
While you’re spending all this time and energy posting great content, you want to be sure people are seeing it. Facebook makes this more challenging by the day with various updates to its News Feed algorithm, EdgeRank. In order to grow and engage with your fans, you must put some money behind your efforts. Facebook and Twitter allow for you to boost or promote your posts to ensure your content appears in the feed of more of your fans and followers. As more users can see and thereby engage with your content, the more interaction you’ll see. You may also consider checking out the Mainframe digital marketing agency powered by PPMA. It’s a subscription service that provides you with timely content as well as other digital assets.

**The Bottom Line**
Standing out on social media and finally reaping the fruits of your efforts may seem daunting, but given time, these channels prove to be a valuable and integral part of your customer relations and marketing strategies.

Want to become involved with PPMA?
Contact cmannes@pestworld.org.
The pest control industry faces a number of significant risk exposures. While the most obvious ones are tied directly to the core business, such as effective application of product, some of the largest exposures are actually related to fleet operations. These exposures include third party claims arising from vehicle crashes and damage to company vehicles from collisions. The financial impact is severe. It can take hundreds of service calls to make up for the cost of one crash and, in less frequent cases, a catastrophic crash can bring a formally robust business to its knees. For most organizations, their vehicles are moving billboards as well as representation of their company.

While improved products and processes have greatly reduced injuries to employees and exposure claims, the average cost of vehicle crashes has dramatically increased. This trend has affected not only the pest control industry, but all service based fleets. Newer vehicles are much more expensive to repair than their older counterparts and third party claimants are much more likely to use an attorney than in years past. One only has to watch television for an hour or drive down the interstate to be bombarded with ads instructing anyone involved in a crash to contact their law firm so that they can have a cash windfall.

In 2015, fleet losses were an area of significant concern for a number of major commercial insurance carriers. Carriers are now looking much closer at their insured’s loss histories and safety practices. They want to make sure that their clients are not a serious claim waiting to occur.

Fleet operations pose a huge challenge to operations because there are so many variables involved. Company employees can make poor decisions while driving that lead to near miss incidents or crashes. A number of important items to consider are:

Screening Process: Your operators are the key to any safe fleet operation and the screening process is often not...
as detailed as it should be, due to either time constraints or the challenge of finding qualified technicians. The best service fleets look at each new employee as bringing a new member into their family. The operator needs to have safe work practices, be able to control the vehicle, and often travel on very congested roadways. They also work under time constraints from both the company and customers. Ensuring that this individual has a relatively safe driving history and can operate the vehicle he is going to be tasked to drive is the first part. This includes reviewing an applicant’s MVR and conducting a road test. The driver qualification process is the key to the safety castle!

Effective On-boarding: Once an operator is hired they need to be indoctrinated in how the company wants them to do their job. This includes how to drive the vehicle and store any equipment or chemicals. There should be some education on defensive driving as well as directions on how to operate the vehicle in either a driver’s manual or the operations handbook. They need to know what to do when a problem occurs on the road.

Management: Management also plays a critical role in fleet safety. They set the tone by creating expectations and enforcement mechanisms. Employees will work to do what is required of them, whether that be speed, safety, or always meeting the requests of customers. Regularly explaining how work is supposed to be done and what will happen when deviations occur is an important part of any operation. Managers and supervisors must also live by the same rules that they require their field personnel to abide by. Having a distracted driver policy and watching the head of sales hold a phone in one hand and write notes with his other while driving sends the wrong message to everyone at the company. The safety message starts at the top and works its way down.

Monitoring: There should be a driver monitoring mechanism in place. This can include supervisor observations, a citizen complaint program, and telematics (vehicle monitoring). The electronic monitoring of vehicles has become much more sophisticated over the last few years and can include vehicle location, speed, hard braking incidents, hard cornering and geo fencing. Constantly knowing how your vehicles are being driven often changes the way drivers approach their task. Having objective data to identify at risk drivers allows managers to make informed decisions about discipline and remedial training. Once an at risk or problematic driver has been identified some form of action must take place!

A key part of any risk management/safety program is engaging partners to assist and identify gaps. The insurance broker usually serves as a key advisor leveraging their knowledge as well as internal and external resources to benefit the pest control industry. Their work can include policy reviews to mitigate risk exposures, engaging the insurance carrier to review claims/identify loss drivers, and bringing in safety consultants that can identify gaps in safety programs and provide education to reduce future safety lapses. A great safety program starts from within and needs to be constantly reviewed for improvement and utilizes the best resources available.

For an expert consultation, please contact Weisburger Insurance Brokerage at 800-431-2794, info@weisburger.com, or visit our site at www.weisburger.com. Weisburger, a division of Program Brokerage Corporation, is the nationally endorsed insurance broker of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). With over 80 years of experience, our experts are able to review your current coverage and identify ways to best protect your pest control business during the dips and peaks of the industry.
As a business owner, you’ve mastered customer service and marketing. You know pest management. But managing your employees can still be a challenge.

It’s Monday morning and you’re still reeling from Bob’s on the job injury last week. Not to mention the fact that no one has heard from him and he hasn’t come back to work. Who ya’ gonna call?

Maybe Sandy Seay. Seay runs Florida-based Seay Management Consultants. He’s represented and advised pest management companies for nearly 50 years and has spoken with hundreds of NPMA members since the 1970’s.

Workers compensation issues are one of the most frequent types of calls that come in to Seay’s office.

Calls to Seay Management Consultants about employment questions are free to NPMA members—very convenient when issues pop up seemingly from nowhere. (For a detailed list of free HR services see the sidebar listing.) “We get calls on a variety of issues from small business owners who don’t know how to react,” says Seay. After explaining the situation, they ask “what should we do?”

For NPMA members with questions on dealing with a workplace problem, here’s how it works.

Calls coming in are directed to Seay or a staff member. They then listen to a full description of the issue, lay out the options, (often in multiple calls and emails) and make a recommendation for moving forward.

Human resources problems typically arise either because no employee handbook exists to spell out policies or because the handbook is “way too generic” according to Seay who discourages businesses from using a boilerplate handbook from an online publisher or the free one offered by many payroll companies. To be effective “[employee] handbooks need to be written by an HR professional,” says Seay, and deal with a specific organization.

While many NPMA members contact Seay for human resources advice on problems as they come up, some of those businesses later return to Seay for a written proposal on developing a policy. There are no hidden costs, and since NPMA members receive a 15 percent discount, fees are generally lower than what is available elsewhere.

Many business owners develop new policies and programs after an initial scare. But having established workplace policies lets you inform employees before an issue ever becomes a problem. And letting employees know what’s expected in an employee handbook allows you to prove the policies exist if challenged in court.

You will need to determine which policies have to be included by law and state requirements can vary. Often a Family and Medical Leave policy (covering businesses with 50 or more employees), equal employment and nondiscrimination policy and workers’ compensation policy are required. Many handbooks also include sections on the paid time off policy, employee behavior, pay and promotions and benefits.

Now that you’ve gotten an answer to your question and are ready to put new policies into place before the next HR crisis? Communicate.

How you send the message can be just as important as the message itself. It helps to remember that any new policies are just another way for employees to understand your perspective. Your policies should reflect the way you do business. Be clear to all employees that equal opportunity, ethical behavior and respect for others are critical to the employment relationship.
NPMA members can call Seay Management Consultants at 407-426-9484 to speak with one of Seay’s HR consultants free of charge or email sandy@seay.us. The employment issues covered include:

- Writing and Revising Employee Handbooks.
- Writing, Developing and Implementing Affirmative Action Plans, where Required by Federal Regulations.
- Managing OFCCP Affirmative Action Audits.
- Compliance with all of the Employment Regulations that Cover Pest Management Companies.
- Resolving Discrimination Charges or Claims of Unfair Treatment.
- Human Resources Management Audits.
- Wage and Hour Analysis, Advice and Recommendations.
- Telephone and Email Advice, Guidance and Direction.
- Employee Opinion Surveys, Analysis and Recommendations.
- Management Development and Supervisory Training.
- Leadership Assessment and Development Programs.
- Compensation Management and Salary Administration Programs.
- Performance Appraisal Forms and Systems.
- Developing and Writing Job Descriptions.
- Counter-Union Campaigns—Remaining Union Free.
- Labor Relations Guidance and Advice.
- Americans with Disabilities Advice and Recommendations.
- Assistance with Employee Matters such as Discipline and Dismissal.
- Resolving Employee Problems and Conflicts.
- Preventing and Resolving Sexual Harassment Problems and other Sensitive Work Issues.
- Resolving Wage and Hour and Department of Labor Investigations.
- Assistance in Executive and Management Search Efforts by Recruiting, Screening and Interviewing Prospective Candidates.
- Out-Placement Services—Assistance and Guidance for Employees in Career Transition.
- Other Specialized Management Services.

For services that require more attention than a call or email, such as developing an employee handbook, compensation program, or EEOC discrimination investigation, NPMA members receive a 15 percent discount.
NPMA Submits Comments to EPA on Proposed Certification and Training Rule
In January NPMA submitted formal comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concerning the proposed certification and training rule. The proposed rule was introduced in August of 2015 and if finalized as introduced will have profound impacts on the structural pest management industry nationwide.

Initially, the comment period for the proposed rule was scheduled to end on November 24th but was extended 30 days to December 23rd and another 30 day extension was provided by EPA until January 23, 2016, after requests from NPMA and others.

Since August NPMA has engaged our membership in multiple webinars and in-depth conversations about the impacts of this rule for our members. In addition to communicating with members, NPMA has also consistently communicated our concerns with EPA about the proposed rule, and plan to continue to meet with EPA before and after the comment period closes.

I.R.S. Section 179 threshold Increased to $500,000 Indefinitely
In December Congress passed both a $1.1 trillion omnibus and a separate “tax extender” bill. The omnibus will fund the government through September 2016. Part of the negotiations was approving a large tax extender package which was approved as a standalone bill. Several important tax provisions for businesses and individuals were reauthorized. Most importantly, the section 179 property deduction was raised to $500,000, made permanent and indexed for inflation.

This is a significant victory for NPMA member companies, and clearly your voice was heard loud and clear about the importance of this deduction. This was one of our legislative day topics championed on the Hill last March and also part of a grassroots campaign in early December with hundreds of NPMA members sending notes to their Congressional representatives.

Without this, the deduction was only $25,000 for section 179 business property in 2015 and beyond. During negotiations, it was proposed to increase the deduction for only two years, but the final outcome of making the deduction permanent and indexing cannot be understated how great that is for PMPs. The exemption allows for the purchasing and deduction of up to $500,000 of qualifying section 179 business property in 2015 rather than depreciating the property over several years. Qualifying section 179 business property includes: tangible personal property used in business, Air Conditioning and Heating Units, Business Vehicles with a gross vehicle weight in excess of 6,000 lbs., Computers, Software, Office Equipment and Office Furniture, etc.

EPA Publishes Draft NPDES General Permit Renewal, Congress Takes Action
In January the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Pesticide General Permit for Point Source Discharges From the Application of Pesticides; Reissue. The NPDES general permit is required by federal law to be renewed on a five year cycle, with the current general permit expiring on October 31, 2016. The published draft general permit is essentially the same as the previous and only minor changes were proposed.

The requirement for NPDES permits is a result of a 2009 U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Nat’l Cotton Council v. EPA. The court determined that under the Clean Water Act (CWA) discharges of pollutants (chemical pesticides) into Waters of the United States (WOTUS) shall require obtaining an NPDES permit. The ruling came despite EPA's opposition and argument that pesticides applied in accordance with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) are exempt from CWA’s permitting requirements. Subsequently, EPA created the general NPDES permit for pesticides in October of 2011 and the permit is now required to be renewed by October 31, 2016.

NPMA is aggressively pursuing legislative solutions to the overly redundant NPDES permits. In January the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works
(EPW) Committee passed the bipartisan Sportsman Act (S. 659) by a 12-8 vote. Important for the pest management industry was the addition of language that would eliminate the need for overly burdensome and unnecessary National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The amendment, offered by Senators Crapo (R-ID), Fisher (R-NE) and Carper (D-DE), is the text of the Sensible Environmental Protection Act of 2015 (S. 1500), a bill we have strongly endorsed. The timeline is uncertain but the next step will be for the bill to come to the floor of the U.S. Senate for a vote.

**EPA Scrutinizes Fumigants; NPMA Leads Stewardship**
Recent incidents involving structural fumigants in the Caribbean and Florida prompted an internal investigation by the EPA Inspector General (OIG). The OIG’s primary objectives for the initial investigation are to determine the extent and nature of adverse impacts caused by structural fumigants and whether regulatory, program execution, or other factors within EPA are associated with the adverse impacts.

NPMA continuously supports efforts to strengthen the professionalism of the pest management industry. In an effort to do so, we have established a process to identify issues and discuss ways that NPMA members, and the broader industry, can ensure enhanced stewardship of fumigants that will result in the ability to continue to use these vital tools now and in the future. NPMA is working with industry stakeholders and regulators to develop a proactive response.

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Hiring the right people can save you time, money, and stress in the long run. And if you have a process in place, you can use it to your advantage for marketing and employee retention. The QualityPro standards are our industry’s best practices for professionalism. Meet the following standards for hiring new employees and reap the rewards of having a trustworthy team.

Gather your candidates
1. **Require an application for employment**
   A resume is no substitute for an application. Get job-relevant information as well as a complete (up to 15 years) job history to inform your initial screening. States vary on whether you can ask about criminal history. This is the first task you ask a new employee to complete. Make sure they do it well.

2. **Interview initially qualified candidates**
   A face-to-face interview is the next step in finding the right person. An interview is an opportunity for you to promote your company and the candidate to tell you about him or herself. Interviewing is an art, but there are also rules that apply. Know what you can and cannot ask and, for a fair process, stick to a script.

3. **Check references**
   Make a reasonable effort to contact previous employers, employer agents, or third-party automated employment verification companies to confirm what the candidate has shared with you. The QualityPro standard is to make at least two attempts (phone call and message) per reference. Document your attempts and the results.

Offer the position
4. **Obtain a criminal background report**
   This is the longest of the 16 QualityPro Certification standards. In short, the QualityPro standard is to obtain a criminal background report on all current and prospective employees where permitted by law. If the report comes back with an offense or the employee has disclosed information to you already, you need to make an informed decision on whether to hire the candidate. NPMA members have access to an HR consultant for just this kind of conversation. We recommend you use this valuable member benefit to help make this important decision.

5. **Do a motor vehicle record check**
   If the candidate will drive for company business, obtain MVR check from the state where the candidate is licensed to drive. Don’t let the individual drive on company business until you receive this report.

6. **Do a pre-employment drug test**
   This is another lengthy standard we encourage every employer in the pest management industry to read. In addition to conducting drug tests, enact and enforce a written drug-free workplace policy.*

*Companies that have applied for or earned the QualityPro Certification have access to forms, model policies, and resources at qualityprotools.org to help meet these standards. QualityPro reviews these documents periodically for compliance with employment regulations. As an NPMA member, you also have HR representative available to you.

Read the full QualityPro Certification standards at npmaqualitypro.org/qualityprohandbook

A Win-Win Situation
Meeting the QualityPro standards for hiring helps ensure you have the best team possible and puts your company’s hiring practices on-par with the most successful companies in our industry. Coworkers and customers alike may feel more secure knowing the process you have in place for new employees. In addition, potential applicants may screen themselves when they find out that your process involves reference checks, a criminal background report, a MVR check, and a pre-employment drug test, saving everyone valuable time.

QualityPro is administered by the Foundation for Professional Pest Management, an independent organization that develops good business practices and standards. Designed specifically for pest management companies in the US and Canada, this certification is available to companies that are currently members of the National Pest Management Association. For more information, please contact Allie Taisey at ataisey@pestworld.org or visit www.npmaqualitypro.org
QualityPro
What it means to work for a QualityPro certified company

A TEAM YOU CAN TRUST

- Every employee completed a comprehensive job application prior to their interview
- We checked references as part of your hiring process
- Each employee has had a criminal background check and drug test
- Each service and sales professional has met or exceeded state licensing and testing requirements
- Everyone who drives as part of their job has had a motor vehicle records check

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

- Our advertising practices never use false, misleading, or unsubstantiated claims
- Our warranties and service agreements are clear, honest, and we stick to them
- Our services include the best practices in pest management and are sold and performed by trained professionals
- Our safety policies help protect our employees, our customers, and the environment

A PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS

- We are members of the National Pest Management Association
- Our company has a drug-free workplace policy
- Our vehicles are well-maintained as well as marked and organized according to state law
- We hold sufficient insurance for general liability, auto, and worker’s compensation (or our state’s equivalent)
- Our customer-facing employees look professional according to our dress practices policy

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Less than 3% of companies in our industry are QualityPro Certified
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QualityPro
The mark of excellence in pest management
James Molluso, vice president and partner with Northeastern Exterminating in New York, was literally born into the pest control industry. “It’s in my blood,” he says. “I have ‘bug blood’ running through my veins.”

Born in Brooklyn in 1987, James was only six when his father Joseph Molluso started Northeastern Exterminating. Now 28, James has “officially” worked with father for the past decade. However, James was a young apprentice long before that.

“Since day one, I’ve been my father’s right hand man in the business,” remarks James. When Joseph first started the business, he worked out of his family home in the basement. “My play area was right next to my father’s desk,” James recalls. “At a young age, I sat on his lap and he taught me how to sell accounts. He taught me that customer satisfaction was key and ways to make the customers feel comfortable.”

James says his father often took him on pest inspections, where he taught James how to spot signs of pests. “I can bet I was the only kid in my elementary school who knew what an active termite tube looked like,” he laughs.

Most importantly, James says his father taught him important life and career lessons. “I think all of those experiences planted a seed with me at a young age and taught me the value of good old fashioned work ethic and the value of a buck.”

After he graduated high school, James explored other careers, but the pest control industry kept calling him back. Around the age of 18, James obtained his pest control technician’s license. “At the time, I was attending a local community college with not much direction or idea of what I wanted to do,” he remembers. He eventually became a licensed EMT.

“In 2011, I was contacted by the FDNY EMS division to join the academy,” he recalls. James was suddenly faced with a dilemma. “If I wanted to join the academy, I’d have to leave the family business—all I’d ever known and loved.”

He says the choice wasn’t all that difficult. “After 10 years as a licensed pest control tech and learning the industry since I was in diapers, it wasn’t a hard decision to make,” he says. “Throughout all my life changes, I knew my passion was pest control. I had poured blood, sweat and many tears into this family business, so I knew where I belonged.”

Since then, James has never looked back. After a lifetime in the pest control industry, he lives and breathes this job and genuinely enjoys helping people. “The most important aspect of working in pest control is allowing the public to live in a more comfortable, disease-free community and home,” he says. Plus, no two days are alike. “Every day you have a different account, different personalities to deal with and a different task at hand,” he says. “This business will keep you on your toes.”

James recalls one occasion a few years back when he and his father were literally on their toes. “A client called because a mother raccoon had fallen into their fireplace from the chimney, and it was running wild in their living room,” he recounts. “My father and I arrived at the account to see the panicked family standing outside. We walked straight into the house to see a large, angry raccoon growing at us. We suited up and spent about 25 minutes chasing the raccoon before we finally captured it with the proper tools. That was my first experience with any type of indoor animal control services and probably the most frightening.”

Yet even on the wildest days, James always loves his job. “Working in the family business so long has shown me how you can succeed through good, old fashioned hard work,” he says. “My father taught me that success doesn’t come easy, but when you give it your all, you’ll always get a return. He also taught me that money comes with the honesty. We never try to push treatments or services that people don’t need. When clients feel you’re being honest with them, they’ll always trust your judgement. Nothing beats honesty.”

So what does the future hold for Northeastern Exterminating? James says his goals for the family business are simple. “I hope for more success and growth, but most importantly I hope to always continue to learn and have fun,” he says. “We always want to grow the business, but in a way that maintains our ‘small family business’ feel. There’s a place for large multinational pest control companies, and then there’s a place for your local mom and pop shop.”

Founded in 1993, Northeastern Exterminating is an NPMA member servicing Brooklyn and all areas of New York. To learn more, visit www.bedbugs-brooklyn.com.
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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE OR OTHER NPMA EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.NPMAPESTWORLD.ORG.
Stering insect workers die off in the winter but a colony’s reproductive members can overwinter in an attic. You won’t likely see a mouse scampering along an exterior foundation in January or February in the Midwest but they and their brood could be hard at work inside a home nesting in sleeping bags that are packed away from a summer camping trip.

Yes, colder temperatures do curtail pest activity but just because pests are out of sight doesn’t mean they should be out of mind. Pests actively seek warmer overwintering and harborage locations in the wall voids, attics or storage rooms of your customer’s homes and businesses.

“Pests do not head south for the winter like the snowbirds,” says Jason Everitt, ACE, technical director for Rottler Pest & Lawn Solutions in St. Louis, Missouri. “Extremely cold temperatures will force pests out of their winter harborages to seek a more perfect environment in the living and working spaces inside structures. Pests will go where the warmth is.”

For pests that live primarily indoors including bed bugs or cockroaches inclement winter weather does not fully impact them. However, Everitt points to several examples this winter where pests—often commonly thought of as “warm season” insects—have made an unexpected appearance inside customers’ homes.

In one instance a customer discovered an active infestation of odorous house ants in a wall void after removing a sill plate during a home renovation project. In another, Everitt spotted cluster flies on the exterior of a building despite the thermometer barely cracking the 20 degree mark.

The winter of 2015–2016 has seen fluctuating weather patterns with periods of unseasonably warm temperatures—upper 60s in Boston and New York on Christmas Eve—followed by seasonally cold (below freezing or negative) temperatures. This winter’s rollercoaster can turn an insect’s sense of timing upside down.

Mark Sheperdigian, BCE, vice president of technical services for Rose Pest Solutions in Troy, Michigan, says overwintering pests such as stink bugs, cluster flies, boxelder bugs and even paper wasps can be fooled by a warm, sunny day into thinking spring has arrived and they emerge inside a structure much to the chagrin to a startled customer.

“A warm winter is actually the worst thing for certain species of pests since they do not go fully dormant,” says Sheperdigian. “They will sense the warmer temperatures and think it is time to get up and get moving even though the calendar says it is still winter.”

While these early emerging pests do not survive long they do make the phone ring at the office even when the temperatures outside are at or below the freezing mark.

What should pest management professionals tell their customers who see pests inside their homes in the dead of winter when they are not expected to be there? Sheperdigian recommends letting customers know they will see specific pests in greater numbers at certain times of the year (i.e. stinging insects in late summer and early fall) but it is not out of the realm of possibility to see pests all year around.

“We are unpredictable in their behavior and they have a mind of their own,” says Sheperdigian. “Pests overwinter at different times and are at different stages of their lifecycles during the winter months so it can be difficult to 100 percent predict how they will react.”

Sheperdigian also says it is important for the technician to know the difference between the signs of a full-fledged infestation or just the random spotting of a pest who happened to wake up early from its winter nap.

Everitt reminds his technicians not to put blinders on in the winter and to continue to be vigilant in looking for signs of pest infestations even when it wouldn’t be normal for that pest to be active.

“It is a good time to educate customers about pest behavior and stay on top of your inspections and pest trend reports to see where activity is taking place,” says Everitt. “It can help you get a jump on the spring season when pests really make their presence felt.”

Jeff Fenner is partner at B Communications and can be reached at jfenner@b-communications.com
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