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PESTWORLD

MARCH | APRIL 2024

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STRENGTHENING YOUR COMPANY
THROUGH TOP-NOTCH
CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

INSIDE:

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
BENEFITS EMPLOYEES
AND YOUR COMPANY

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BUILDING A WINNING COMPANY CULTURE

Ensure employee engagement by planning team-building events, recognition and incentives to boost morale and build camaraderie, improving employee retention and making your company a coveted place to work.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS EMPLOYEES AND YOUR COMPANY

Having the right leadership in place can be crucial to your company's continued success and growth—here's how to identify, develop and promote leaders from within, creating a path to success for your best and brightest.



BRIDGING THE GAP

A connected workforce breaks through communication barriers—this can be done by ensuring your departments have a full understanding of all job duties and effectively communicating company goals across departments and locations.



20 Showing Off: Using Employee Achievements to Build Workplace Culture



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Cultivating Your Team


MARILLIAN MISSITI, Buono Pest Control Co., Inc.

In the ever-evolving landscape of pest management, the strength of our teams and the development of our leaders are pivotal to our collective success. This edition of *PestWorld* magazine focuses on team development: it's all about cultivating, nurturing and sustaining the invaluable stakeholders within your organization.

One of the cornerstones of a successful company is its culture. In "Taking Your Company Culture to the Next Level," we explore strategies to maintain a consistent culture, with some real-life examples from your peers. It's about making genuine connections with our teams, keeping them fired up and in sync with the values that define us.

Leadership is the backbone of any successful entity, and having a path to developing those future leaders is vital. In "Developing Your Leadership," we delve into the critical task of selecting and grooming leaders. Learn how to identify and nurture individuals who possess the potential to steer your company towards success.

A well-connected workforce is the bedrock of effective communication. "Bridging the Gap Between Operations and Administration" offers insights into breaking through communication barriers within your organization. Discover the benefits of ensuring that all departments understand each other's roles through training and transparency. Gain valuable tips on communicating common company goals and fostering insight into all departments.

In the spirit of team development and leadership, I encourage each of you to consider becoming an active participant in the NPMA community. Our volunteer committees and councils are the lifeblood of collaboration, providing a platform for industry professionals to unite, share experiences and drive innovation. The deadline to submit your interest form to join one of NPMA's committees or councils is March 29. Embrace this opportunity to contribute to the future of NPMA. Find out more at www.npmapestworld.org/volunteer. 

“This edition of *PestWorld* magazine focuses on **TEAM DEVELOPMENT: IT'S ALL ABOUT CULTIVATING, NURTURING and sustaining the invaluable stakeholders within your organization. ”**

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THE BUSINESS OF PEST MANAGEMENT

PESTWORLD

PUBLISHED FOR:

National Pest Management Association
10460 North Street, Fairfax, VA 22030
703.352.6762 or 800.678.6722
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PROFESSIONAL AND MEMBER WEBSITE:

npmapestworld.org

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PUBLISHED BY:

NAYLOR
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550 SW 2nd Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601
800.369.6220
www.naylor.com

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PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2024/NPMAS0224

COVER: ESB BASIC/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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PestWorld is the bi-monthly publication of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA).

BUILDING A WINNING COMPANY CULTURE

NPMA members share best practices for boosting employee engagement

NICK FORTUNA

At Big Time Pest Control in Anderson, Calif., the Fun Committee continues to deliver good times, and employees can't wait to hear about the next big event.

A handful of the company's 45 employees make up the Fun Committee, which organizes quarterly events for workers and their families meant to boost morale and build camaraderie. Big Time Pest Control recently held a Christmas party featuring food, a live DJ, a photo booth and plenty of door prizes for attendees.

Last summer, the company rented out a local waterpark for the evening after it had closed to the general public, allowing workers and their families to skip the

NPMA Members Creating an Amazing Company Culture

Big Time Pest Control celebrates the company's 15-year anniversary.



Balancing teamwork and tension one block at a time in the All-American Pest Control ultimate team Jenga tournament.



Sonja Sutter is cool, calm and collected during the All-American Pest Control team Jenga tournament.



Carolyn Cox, Lexus Jenkins and Anna Major dressed up for the All-American Pest Control "In the Groove" annual end-of-the-year celebration while collecting food for Second Harvest Food Bank.



John Oakley, Carolyn Cox, Ken Koons and Lexus Jenkins are "In the Groove" during the All-American Pest Control company meeting at the Hermitage Golf Course.



The All-American team spends some time working together to "escape."

long lines for the park's most popular attractions. Other events have included a barbecue and outdoor screening of "The Princess Bride" at a local park and renting out a local roller-skating rink.

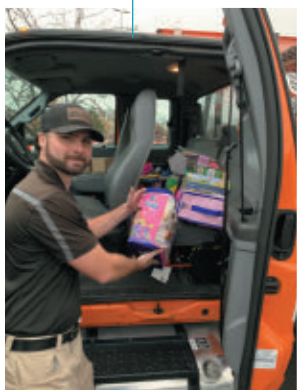
"We try to do something every quarter," said Mike Bullert, president and chief executive of Big Time Pest Control, which is opening a second office location in Northern California this year.

"It's an opportunity to connect not just with our employees but with their families after hours and build more of a team environment," he added. "It's hard to get good, quality employees, so when we get them, we want to hang onto them, and creating a good company culture is a big part of that."

On the opposite coast, American Pest is taking a similar approach to employee engagement. In early December, the Fulton, Md.-based company had already outlined its entire event calendar for 2024, featuring summer barbecues at the company's five branch locations and team breakfasts at local restaurants.

President Kevin Poland said planning the event calendar months in advance helps him to get face time periodically with each of American Pest's approximately 375 employees, and it gives workers events to look forward to. The company wants employees to feel valued, so Poland makes it a point to don a chef's apron and grill the burgers himself.

To foster a spirit of community service, Big Time Pest Control recently delivered Toys for Tots in a parade of its delivery vehicles.



Jen Sweeney-Ingram and Hayli Burgess placing wreaths during All-American Pest Control's annual Wreaths Across America day of service.



Kevin Poland, president of American Pest, cooks burgers for employees.



Kevin Poland, president, with Charlie Barton, field operations manager at the American Pest technician training's Annual Snap Trap Challenge in March 2023—the challenge was held to see how many snap traps employees could set in 60 seconds.



Big Time Pest Control holds an annual family event at Water Works, renting out the entire facility out, with barbecue and family fun.

"We do offsite events for different parts of our organization where we're dedicating time for bonding and camaraderie to build our culture, so it's not just focused around work," Poland said. "When you're focused on bringing people together rather than just the actual work tasks at hand, those are the events that we see more long-term benefits from."

Denise G. Aranoff, vice president of marketing at American Pest, said the segmented nature of pest control—with technicians on the road and the company's different departments working independently—can lead some teams to view the business as "us vs. them." But by bringing teams together socially, the company helps employees to put

faces with names, leading to more positive workplace interactions.

"When you're physically in the same space, there's a level of trust and engagement that isn't there when you're just using technology to chat with each other," she said. "Coming out of the pandemic, people feel disconnected in general, so any time we can bring people together, it helps to establish those connections."

Pest control can be demanding, with technicians waking up early to cover vast distances on their routes, so American Pest plans most of its team-building events for working hours. In the past, events planned for evenings or weekends drew the same small groups of employees

“We try to do something every quarter. It’s an **OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT NOT JUST WITH OUR EMPLOYEES BUT WITH THEIR FAMILIES after hours and build more of a team environment.**

**—Mike Bullert, president and chief executive,
Big Time Pest Control**”

instead of bringing large numbers of employees together, Aranoff said.

So precious are those weekend hours that employees have even let free tickets to professional and collegiate sporting events go unclaimed, she added.

The right types of off-hours events can prove popular with employees, however. All-American Pest Control, with about 65 employees spread across four locations in Tennessee, established a calendar of events for employees and their families as a way to stay connected during COVID-19, according to CEO Erin Richardson.

Company-sponsored events have included a zoo visit, navigating an escape room, competing at Topgolf and “playing tourist in our town for a day,” she said. In 2024, the company is adding community service to its events calendar, with employees getting together to volunteer at local nonprofits.

Whether the events are purely recreational or involve giving back, they “have the same purpose of relationship-building through fun, memorable activities outside of work,” Richardson said.

Across the country, NPMA members are taking a multipronged approach to employee engagement. Here are some of their strategies:

1. HIRE AND PROMOTE BASED ON PEOPLE SKILLS.

Richardson said middle management is the “heartbeat of company culture,” and daily interactions between supervisors and their teams can determine whether a company succeeds. That’s why All-American promotes team members based on their people skills instead of their pest-control skills, rewarding workers who display teamwork and professionalism, she said.

“All leadership roles’ first obsession should be team experience,” Richardson said. “We train on communication skills, follow-through, seeking first to understand, coaching, giving and receiving quality feedback, growth mindset, celebrating progress and other key people skills that create a great place to work.”

Bullert said Big Time Pest Control tries to make employees feel valued right from the start by giving them a welcome bag that includes a company-branded lunchbox, coffee mug, notepad and other useful items. On their first day, new hires spend time in the field with an experienced employee in the same role, kickstarting the training process and making onboarding smoother, he said.

2. INCENTIVIZE EMPLOYEES.

Big Time Pest Control’s team-building efforts have taken on an international flavor. The company is sending seven of its top performers, including technicians and administrative staffers, on a four-day vacation to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. The trip marks the third year of Big Time’s Award of Excellence program, which rewards employees for hitting key performance benchmarks, Bullert said.

In the past, employees also have brought home steaks and sausages from the company’s support of junior livestock auctions, he added.

3. CREATE AN INVITING WORKPLACE.

Since employees spend so much time on the job, the little things matter. Bullert said Big Time Pest Control has various types of music streaming in its office, creating an upbeat working environment.

Although technicians aren’t obligated to come into the office, anyone who shows up on Tuesdays gets a free lunch, he said. The company shuts off the phones for an hour so employees can talk about what’s going on at the company and get to know each other better.

There’s also a robust snack bar and refrigerator featuring instant soup, protein bars, granola bars, beef jerky, popcorn, bottled water and energy drinks, allowing workers to skip the convenience store and save some money, Bullert said.

“If someone needed to, they could make a meal out of what we have here, and our employees appreciate that,” he said.

4. CELEBRATE SUCCESS.

Once a month, Big Time holds a meeting at a hotel conference room to update employees on company initiatives and cover training topics. Employees receive acknowledgment and gift cards for birthdays, work anniversaries and accomplishments such as meeting production standards and becoming associate certified entomologists.

A GPS system in technicians’ vehicles monitors their driving habits, so the company’s safest drivers also are acknowledged. In addition, positive feedback from customers is read aloud to the group, celebrating those team members who have provided exemplary customer service, Bullert said.

Company meetings also include fun components such as movie and pop-culture trivia, with teams of employees competing for points. At the end of the year, the team with the most points gets an extra vacation day, adding an

element of gamification to company meetings that otherwise might be bland.

“We try to make our meetings fun and exciting,” Bullert said. “It gets people from different departments working together as a team.”

Similarly, All-American Pest Control established a Kudos Program in which positive feedback from customers and fellow employees is shared throughout the company. Kudos can be converted into company merchandise and gift cards, Richardson said.

“This program has fostered a culture of appreciation where acknowledging each other’s efforts has become ingrained in the company’s DNA,” she said.

5. IDENTIFY EMERGING LEADERS.

Career development is key to employee retention, so Big Time recently started a program called Catalyst aimed at nurturing its top performers. Eight top contributors who have expressed interest in career advancement were selected for the initial six-month program, which involves monthly meetings designed to broaden their skillset and increase their understanding of the business, Bullert said.

Topics covered have included personal development, creating your personal brand and professional image and creating value for customers.

“We’re growing, so we’re really focused on identifying ways to get people to buy in and see this as a career and not

just a job,” Bullert said. “By doing that, hopefully they’ll give us a second look and stay with us if they have an opportunity to go somewhere else for a dollar an hour more.”

6. SOLICIT EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK.

To boost employee retention, American Pest surveys employees at least once a year to gauge their job satisfaction and identify areas for improvement, Aranoff said. One main goal is to increase the percentage of employees who feel that American Pest is a great place to work—one that they’d recommend to a friend—since employee referrals are an important part of recruitment.

Employees are asked about their workload, relationships with their coworkers, the level of support they receive from management and whether they have the right tools and training to be effective at their jobs, Poland said. One takeaway from the surveys was that employees want to know how the company is doing and what new initiatives it’s working on, so Poland has begun holding virtual meetings each month to keep the team updated on important developments.

“We’ve gotten a lot of candor and good feedback from those surveys, which has been great,” he said. “It’s all about being intentional and making sure you connect with your employees on a regular basis. If you come up with a sound plan, communicate what that plan is and execute on that plan, you can get more buy-in and create a company culture that employees want to be a part of.” ○

The poster features a background of orange and yellow hexagons. On the left, the text reads: **88th ANNUAL** in large white font, **Pest Management** in white, **VIRTUAL** in orange, and **Conference** in white. Below this is **March 18 - 29, 2024** in orange. A QR code is in the bottom left with the text **REGISTER HERE** above it and the URL <https://cvent.me/AzkZM0> below it. On the right, the **PURDUE UNIVERSITY** logo is at the top, with **Entomology** below it. The main title is **The Leading Conference for Innovative IPM**. Below that, it says **With speakers including*:** and **Keynote: Dr. Faith Oi**. A list of speakers follows: Dan Baldwin, Mike Bentley, Dan Collins, Dr. Bobby Corrigan, Dr. Jody Green, Lee Green, Eric Ham, Dale Hodgson, Hardy Kern, Dr. Cassie Krejci, Jeff McGovern, Dave Scott, Mark Sheperdian, Dr. Jay Tischendorph, and Mark VanderWerp. At the bottom right, it says ***Program and speakers subject to change**.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS EMPLOYEES AND YOUR COMPANY

SHERYL S. JACKSON

Leadership is not a job title, but a role that someone assumes in a company. Whether it is a supervisor guiding a group of technicians or an employee mentoring and training another, the importance of developing leaders within the company cannot be overstated. Creating an in-house pipeline of aspiring leaders who are prepared to assume new roles boosts employee engagement, reduces the headaches and costs associated with turnover and positions the company for future growth.

Accel Pest and Termite Control has grown from two employees to 70 and reached \$8 million in revenue in 13 years. “We were caught off guard by our rapid growth, and we did not really know what we needed in place to handle this growth,” said Shon Vodila, president of the company. Although supervisor and manager positions were created throughout the growth, the concept of identifying potential employee leaders within the company and developing them has only been in place for a few years.

“We’ve learned from the past that the best technician does not always make the best manager, but technicians often believe that their only option to progress is to step into a management role,”

said Vodila. “We created a career path for technicians with specific titles that reflect different levels of responsibility, skills and licenses, and every year we talk about the path with each technician to see where they want to be in three, five or 10 years,” he said. A chart that outlines each step of the progression, which does not require assumption of a formal management role, clearly shows technicians that they can continue to learn and develop new skills with the same company. “This





“ I like to send employees to conferences, chapter meetings and training sessions to let them **LEARN FROM PEOPLE OUTSIDE OUR COMPANY, then I watch how they react to the opportunities.**

**—Shon Vodila, president,
Accel Pest and Termite Control ”**

helps with recruitment and retention because people see opportunities to advance.”

“I like to send employees to conferences, chapter meetings and training sessions to let them learn from people outside our company, then I watch how they react to the opportunities,” said Vodila. He looks for employees to interact with people from other companies, to attend and talk about learning opportunities and to come back to the office with ideas. “Future leaders look for ways to solve problems, don’t wait for direction and are self-sufficient.”

One of Vodila’s success stories is Jon Furdek, who started with the company as a termite technician. “He saw a way we could better serve our customers and came to me with his ideas,” he said. Furdek continued to learn, develop his skills and share ideas to improve the company as a technician and technical director, and is now director of operations. “He

has also been accepted into the NPMA Executive Leadership Program.” (See page 12.)

Rapid growth also presented challenges for Pest-End, which grew from a \$5 million company with 50 employees to \$10 million and 92 employees in five years. “We struggled with leadership and span of control and at one time had one supervisor for 20 technicians,” said Courtney Carace, chief operating officer. “Hiring experienced supervisors outside the company was proving to be quite challenging. Though we had successfully hired three individuals, we had another opening and knew we had to start cultivating talent internally but did not know where to start,” she said. “We used Phil Cooper’s vetting program and Accelerated Gross Profit class to evaluate four team members who we believed demonstrated leadership skills. One of those individuals was promoted to supervisor after the conclusion of the course.”



Executive Leadership Program Prepares Future Industry Leaders

NPMA's Executive Leadership Program (ELP) identifies and trains aspiring association leaders to establish a pipeline of engaged members that represents NPMA's diverse membership. Each year, NPMA selects a cohort of participants to go through a two-year curriculum that involves professional development, association training, monthly mentoring and attendance at NPMA events.

The 2025 ELP Class application is now open, with applications due on November 15, 2024. For more information or to complete an application, go to www.npmapestworld.org/elp.

It's important not to try to put "a square peg in a round hole" when identifying leaders, said Carace. "We don't want to set up someone for failure, so we allow time to coach, let them shadow other team members and take on small projects to see if moving into management is right for them and for the company," she said. Pest-End's human resources director offers training on how to conduct performance reviews, handling difficult conversations and other skills needed at sessions attended by all members of the management team as well as aspiring managers during the slower seasons of fall and winter.

The company also sends team members to conferences and industry training opportunities and will cover tuition for outside courses and meetings depending on budget flexibility, time of year and value of experience to the team member's personal or professional development. As a graduate of NPMA's Executive Leadership Program, Carace saw the benefit of learning from others outside the company. "I saw the value of networking, mentoring and sharing ideas," she said. "I was part of a small cohort of five people, and we still talk daily, but I also

met others in the industry when I need advice or want to brainstorm ideas. In fact, I'm now mentoring someone and that relationship has been mutually beneficial."

While finding good supervisors is difficult, the acquisition of several family-owned pest management businesses in Pest-End's service area by larger companies resulted in several qualified supervisors who wanted to continue working for a family-owned business applying at Pest-End, says Carace. "In addition to hiring people from other pest control companies, we also received strong applications from, and hired, people with management experience in other industries." The willingness to look outside the industry led to the hiring of one person who had worked as a pest control technician for a few years but also had management experience in a different industry. She began as an assistant supervisor, has been promoted twice and is now an IPM director.

"We are intentional about identifying and developing future leaders," said Timson Green, branch manager, JP McHale Pest Management. "Technicians may have their initial pesticide applicator license but are they also working toward obtaining more categories," he said. "The people you want to develop as leaders are those who are constantly learning and growing their skills."

Green also looks for employees who take the initiative to suggest better

ways to serve customers and who take action to solve a problem or help others. “On inventory day, is there a technician who takes the lead to help pack everything away,” he said. “The technician who sees a need and takes action without being told to do so has the potential to be a leader,” he said.

“Leadership development begins with a conversation about career paths, but not everyone should be or wants to be a supervisor or manager,” said Green. “Leaders need the technical skills and soft skills, but more importantly, they must be dependable.” Even if an employee is qualified to lead, be aware that there may be circumstances that make a supervisor or manager position wrong for the person at that time. “My best skilled employee who would make a great supervisor doesn’t want the position because he now works at night so he can be at home with his children while his wife works as a teacher during the

day,” he explained. “His schedule is built around his personal and family needs now, but they may change over time, so I respect his priorities and hope to offer the role to him in the future.”

In addition to offering classes at his branch to help his 40 technicians add categories to their licenses, Green also invites outside speakers to his branch meetings to talk about best practices and procedures. “I think it’s important for people to learn about more than new products from vendors and to learn how other people handle complex scenarios,” he said. “The speaker may describe the same process or technique that we implement at JP McHale, but the message coming from a different voice often reinforces the fact that this is a best practice.”

Being intentional, offering career options and providing resources to learn new skills so they can become successful supervisors and managers are the keys to successful leadership

development as well as the retention of talent.

Although a natural leader doesn’t have to have a title, Pest-End created different layers of management with a tiered career path for field staff. This strategy provides an opportunity for team members to grow personally and professionally while staying at the company, said Carace. “Our program includes roles such as quality control director and trainer so field staff who are highly skilled but don’t want to supervise others also have a way to advance.”

The technician career pathway developed for the field staff was so well received that Vodila was asked to create pathways for customer service representatives and the administrative staff—by the customer service and administrative employees. The extra work was worth it, he said. “I get more satisfaction from developing people than anything else I do.” ○

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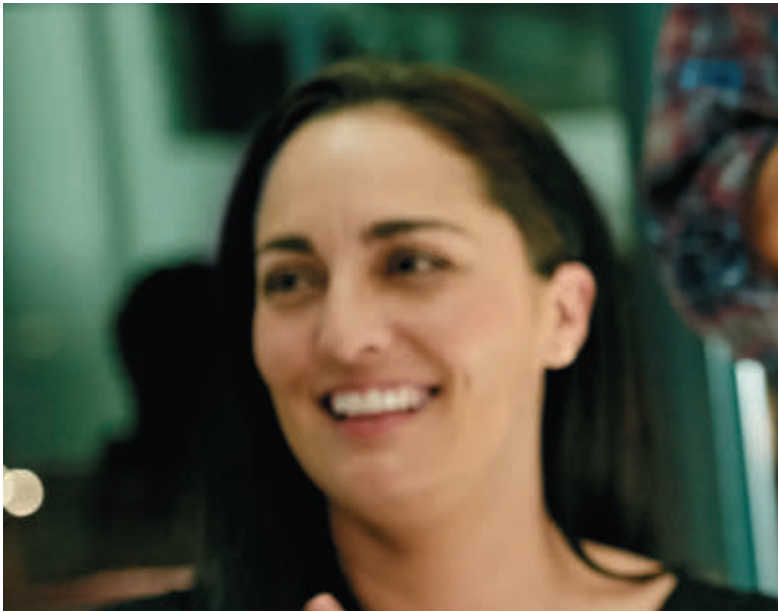
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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS

Helping your operations and administrative teams understand their unique roles

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“Across organizations, everyone has the same shared values that they apply differently to their particular roles. That provides a LOT OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE BUSINESS but gives a depth of vision into their own roles and responsibilities.
—Rob Greer, chief operating officer, Rove Pest Control”

Just as any sports team must understand that distinct roles can coalesce into a winning combination, helping operations and administration understand unique roles can rack up the wins.

But building a team in the pest management industry is no easy task—and we’re not just talking about hiring. With distinct roles and distant operations, ensuring that the field and the office are on the same page can be complex. Things like remote work and multistate operations only complicate the matter.

For Todd Leyse, owner and president of Adams Pest Control in Medina, Minnesota, the sports analogy was a natural one. He grew up and continues going to sporting events and coaching youth sports. But when his father announced plans to retire, he wanted to scale the company—and that meant he would need to put a team in place to do so.

“I don’t have to do everything as long as I have people around me who can do the things that I’m not well-suited for. When my dad announced he was going to retire, I had about a year to figure out how to replace him. You have to take the time to think about what your team needs and how to complement your strengths or cover up for your weaknesses as a leader.”

Building the right team is just the first step to ensuring that company culture permeates throughout every position, and that there are smooth handoffs between operations and administration.

That is more challenging at a place like Plunkett’s Pest Control, which operates in 20 states from the Canadian border to Mexico. While the company services both residential and commercial accounts, the bulk of its work is in servicing large, audited accounts that support the food chain.

Aly Silva Mulgrew, president of Plunkett’s, works to instill an “understanding and appreciation for the role each party plays and create defined processes when handoffs occur.”

Take collections, for instance. “We all share the goal and responsibility of collecting, but we’ve found it works best to ensure each knows their roles. It is up to the technician to make sure we have the right contact and the right information on file to ask, ‘Are you receiving our service summaries?’ If you’re not getting those, you’re not getting invoices.” With that information verified, the collections role is handed off to administration. “That delineation of roles and responsibilities has been very helpful,” she said.

The same is true at Rove Pest Control, which is based in Minnesota, but has branches as far away

“We’re always looking at **WAYS TO MAKE OURSELVES FEEL LIKE A TEAM, even though we’re across 20 states. It’s something we have to put real effort toward. It’s harder than if we were under one roof.**

—Aly Silva Mulgrew, president, Plunkett’s Pest Control”

as Arizona. “Across organizations, everyone has the same shared values that they apply differently to their particular roles,” said Rob Greer, Rove’s chief operating officer. “That provides a lot of opportunity for alignment across the business but gives a depth of vision into their own roles and responsibilities.”

ALL ON THE SAME PAGE

Ensuring a smooth handoff and workflow between the field and the office starts at the interview process, Greer said.

“The first interview is typically more task-oriented: ‘Can you do the job?’ The second interview, though, is more about a team and values fit, with a lot of experiential questions,” he said.

That isn’t just about finding out more about the potential hire, though. “When they’re done with that interview, they understand some of the pieces that we value,” Greer said. A 13-module training session, completed during the first two weeks on the job, deepens that understanding, he said.

At Plunkett’s, administrative staff works primarily out of three locations, while field technicians may not ever set foot in an office. The company newsletter is a useful tool for profiling team members, including highlighting new faces. “One of the initiatives is profiling someone on the administrative team every month, what is their role, who are they,” Mulgrew said. “These are their pets, their interests and what they like to do in their free time. The more we are able to see each other as real people, the more we’re likely to be kind.”

Leadership visits the regions at the beginning of each year to celebrate what the region has accomplished as well as milestone anniversaries and sales records. Having leadership present helps build “a sense of connection,” Mulgrew said. Actively encouraging employees to share things like hunting explorations, vacations and other life milestones “helps us to feel smaller, even though we are quite large,” she said. “We’re always looking at ways to make ourselves feel like a team, even though we’re across 20 states. It’s something we have to put real effort toward. It’s harder than if we were under one roof.”

Knowing minor details about employees’ lives can help build empathy, an important skill at Rove as well, which helps each employee understand “the longer vision,” Greer said. It may mean taking time to ask more questions of an unhappy customer, for instance, “to help them identify their needs and put together the solution that’s going to work best.”

With the right people in place, a solid company mission that is understood by everyone and consideration of fellow employees, there still are misses, Mulgrew said. “This is always something we can do better, making sure that communication is broadly shared and more importantly, understood.”

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

The right tools—and a culture that encourages or requires use of them—can help. At Plunkett’s, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) not only tracks metrics that showcase how the company is doing on shared goals, but it also helps convey notes between those in the field and those in the office.

“Our ERP system contains all the notes of every interaction that our customer service representative has,” Mulgrew said. “We train our CSRs to make sure that they’re including useful and pertinent information. If the client is particular around knowing the time that we’re arriving, a note to set the exact time is included. Before we had this ERP system, we had technicians call to ask questions about clients and accounts. Once we had the ERP, our call volume dropped. When we looked into it, we found that the technicians were no longer needing to call in; the information was there for them.”

Adams also uses a software tool, a customer relationship management system, which catalogs every interaction between the CSR and the customer. But Leyse takes it a step further, building in accountability.

“A lot of companies communicate between employees via phone calls, texts and emails and there is no accountability to that and very little log in within the CRM,” Leyse said. “Every request that gets created must be closed out. If it wasn’t closed out by the assigned deadline, we can escalate that request to that person’s boss. If somebody assigns a task to the technician in the field, it will escalate to their manager automatically. It allows us to not drop the ball or not drop the ball as frequently.”

In the sports world, a dropped ball can lead to a turnover—one that allows the opponent to score and potentially causes a loss.

In pest management, it can lead to a different kind of turnover—a lost account.

Neither is an optimal outcome. Ensuring that all employees are helping to advance the ball, all while playing their own part and supporting others, can lead to a win. ○

ASK THE EXPERT



Tools for Ant Control

Q Where do I start when dealing with a diverse set of social insects like ants?

A Correct identification is critical for achieving control, and one of the biggest challenges in gaining control is understanding the colony structure of the ant species you are treating. Knowing whether you're dealing with unicolonial ant species (ones that form super-colonies with many satellite nests), or multi-colonial ant species (single nests) impacts the type of products you should apply. It is essential to determine if the species is one that nests indoors, outdoors or both. Certain ant species, such as odorous house ants, Argentine ants and black crazy ants, have satellite colonies and can move locations frequently. Use a product labeled for outdoor broadcast treatments, like Sumari[®] Insecticide, to treat potential hidden nests and achieve better control.

During your inspection, look for sources of food and water, especially in key areas around the structure, such as bark mulch, drip irrigation lines and rotting or damaged wood. Most ants become problems because they extend their search for food, water and shelter into a structure. Make sure you are looking at what direction the ants are foraging in. Some species nest outside and are only in your customers' home for food and water. Use non-repellent liquids and baits to reduce numbers, followed by a barrier treatment once the interior infestation is taken care of. However, when treating interior-nesting ants like pharaoh ants, use baits, as repellent sprays can often cause budding or create satellite colonies, making the problem worse.

No matter what species you are dealing with, ensure you are using products that exploit the foraging and food-sharing behaviors present in most pest ant species, which can make getting control easier. If the product(s)

don't make it to the larvae and queen(s), the likelihood of control diminishes significantly.

Q Why should I use bait when using a liquid insecticide treatment?


A Baiting alongside a non-repellent liquid residual provides an advantage in ant control by enhancing exposure volume with the insecticide treatment.

With the expansion of invasive ant species coupled with increased regulation of products, ant management will become increasingly difficult. Using innovative products, such as baits with better acceptance over a wide range of species or liquid products with novel chemistries, is essential to gain better control. But education of species and their behaviors will remain your best tool for achieving effective, long-term management.

Dealing with highly polygyne species requires a strategic approach. Integrating baits and transferable non-repellents maximizes the impact of the initial treatment. Ants can exhibit selective feeding behaviors, so experimenting with bait attractants can help determine preference. To intercept foraging ants effectively, treat around tree bases or use sprays on elevated access points. Outdoor baiting redirects ant trails away from structures, preventing indoor infestations. Treatments of certain species, like odorous house ants and Argentine ants, with satellite colonies and frequent relocations, benefit from products labeled for outdoor broadcast treatments. Fast-acting barrier treatments are crucial to keep ants out, but caution is needed to avoid trapping them inside during application.

Q What tips do you have for communicating with customers?

A It is critical to educate clients about the importance of sanitation, preventive measures and the role they play in ant control. Transparency and education are key. Regardless of location, a universal piece of advice is to discourage customers from self-treating with over-the-counter products. While these may offer quick results, they often fall short of delivering lasting control. Explain your actions to the customer, and the reasons behind them, and stress the importance of patience when dealing with social insects.

Your customer can provide vital information that will aid in your inspection. They may be able to locate where ants have been trailing. It can also be helpful to ask if they are willing to pre-bait for ants before you arrive. This will help locate trailing ants so you can perform a more effective inspection and treatment. Have them place a food source like honey, syrup, etc. in areas where they have seen ants. Pro tip: Encourage them to use a piece of wax paper for easy cleanup. 



Making the Most Out of MEDIA RELATIONS

JIM FREDERICKS, Executive Director, PPMA

When it comes to a company's marketing program, media relations is a key part of its success.

Not only does it help spread awareness about a company's services, but it can boost credibility, making your company a trustworthy resource for pest control information and services in your area. In order to have a successful media relations program, it's important to set aside time to ensure your company is prepared for interviews as well as have an idea of how you intend to market your interviews once they've aired or been published.

SECURING AN INTERVIEW

If your company does not have a media relations plan in place, it can be a little overwhelming to get started. Before diving in, your company should determine whether it is looking for earned or paid media, or both. In public relations, earned media is any press coverage that does not require you to pay for it while paid media is exactly as it sounds—something you pay for. A lot of times, paid media allows you to have significant control over what questions you're asked, giving you the ability to make the most out of the opportunity. While this could be tempting, it usually costs a pretty penny and doesn't always come across as authentic as an earned opportunity.

A great way to kick off your media relations program is to create a pitch calendar. Organize yourself by looking at the year ahead, month-by-month, and seeing what topics could be relevant to customers in your area. For example, mosquitoes and ticks are most prominent in the summer. Add them to your pitch calendar for the summer months, but plan on reaching out to local media a couple of weeks in advance to get on their radars. You

can also utilize NPMA Awareness Weeks, such as National Pest Management Month or Rodent Awareness Week, to bolster your pitch calendar. While pitch calendars can be a useful tool, your company will have to act quickly if a pest-related topic pops up in the news unexpectedly. An example of this is if your region suddenly sees an increase in pests due to erratic weather. You'll need to have a pitch and spokesperson ready to jump at this opportunity.

Once you have your pitch calendar, do some digging on local journalists and media outlets to create a list you can reference when you are pitching your topics. This list can also be used to make notes on responses and any successful interviews or positive conversations with journalists. When you go to pitch journalists, make sure the topic is something they are interested in. Journalists respond best to a pitch when it's something relevant to them. This means reporters who cover topics like politics, crime, food and entertainment shouldn't be on your list.

From here, you're ready to develop talking points that will help you nail the interview and drive home your message, whether that be to take proper protection against pests or to call one of your company's pest professionals.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE PLACEMENT

So, you've done the work, and your interview has aired—now what? It's common to think your work here is done, but there are ways you can take advantage of your interview and amplify the opportunity even further.

“In order to have a successful media relations program, it’s important to **SET ASIDE TIME TO ENSURE YOUR COMPANY IS PREPARED FOR INTERVIEWS** as well as have an idea of how you intend to market your interviews once they’ve aired or been published.”

One way to keep the momentum going is by posting about your interview on social media channels. Whether it was a broadcast or online piece, this is a great way to share the interview, and your message, with followers. For online articles, it’s easy to link to the article and even pull out a quote or two to give followers some context on what the interview was about. For broadcast segments, you can do the same. If you are unable to find the segment on the station’s website, reach out to your contact to see if they can give you the interview file and permission to share online.

Once the interview has ran or aired, it’s important to follow up with your contact to thank them for the opportunity. This is a great way to build relationships with journalists, which will likely lead to further opportunities in the future as your company becomes a reputable and reliable source for pest control information. If you find yourself struggling to maintain relationships or even get responses from journalists, don’t be discouraged. Even public relations professionals cite lack of responses from journalists as a top challenge.

At the end of the day, no matter how big or small the opportunity, an interview is a chance to get your company’s name out there. Even if you only secure one new customer as a result, positive media exposure gives you the opportunity to build a relationship with potential clients who will think of your company whenever they need a pest professional. ○



SHOWING OFF:

Using Employee Achievements to Build Workplace Culture

GRIFFIN VOLTSMANN, Certification Program Manager, QualityPro

Accreditation is more than just a way to attract clients. It is an internal declaration of purpose—a statement that a company is not merely servicing accounts, but taking an interest in their clients, their industry and most of all, their employees. QualityPro companies confidently state that their technicians and client services professionals are the best in the industry, and with good reason. But building a culture of quality within a company means reminding those employees of what it is they've accomplished, and what it is they're now a part of.

CELEBRATING EMPLOYEE VICTORIES

The most significant touchpoint for the majority of those working for QualityPro accredited companies is our testing and training program. All employees who interact with clients must be certified as having been trained to the national standard set by QualityPro in order to ensure a baseline quality of service. Each certificate of completion represents significant time, effort and achievement from an employee personally buying into their company's, and our industry's, culture of excellence. The following exams are available to all accredited companies in the Online Learning Center at npmapestworld.org. Completion of each will issue a credential that employees can be proud of. All credentials earned are searchable at www.npmaqualitypro.org/certificates.

- QualityPro for Sales & Service Employees
- Pest Management in Food Processing & Handling Facilities
- GreenPro
- QualityPro Schools
- QualityPro Public Health Core
- Rodent Specialist
- Mosquito Specialist
- Client Service Professional
- Manager Training

QualityPro serves as a mark of excellence for your sales and client services team as well, making them feel recognized as the industry professionals they are. QualityPro encourages individuals to show off the certificates they earn through social media, LinkedIn, and framing the certificates,

which may include our latest credential: the Client Service Professional (CSP).

Training certificates are an individual's achievement, not a company's, which is why they follow an individual throughout their career. In a very real sense, the individual achievements of your employees contribute to the achievements of your company. As you onboard and continue to develop your employees, approach the exams as an investment in your people, showing that you are helping them develop professionally. This can aid in retention and help employees see their future with your company. We've heard from companies who have seen significant improvements in their office culture by publicly displaying training certificates earned by employees—if you show your pride in their work, they will show it, too.


This improvement compounds with each new training certificate an employee earns, proving that the more a company invests in an employee, the more that employee will feel invested in the work they do. We've seen study groups form at companies where employees who have already taken the exams have turned around to help others earn their own certificates, and then celebrate their peers' achievements alongside the company. They understand the level of work and personal achievement and want to pass that along to others to keep raising the bar.

EXCELLENCE AT ALL LEVELS

Although most of the QualityPro standards are about your HR and operations, employees at all levels should feel pride in what you've earned. The same standards of excellence that raise your company above the rest make it the best place for employees to work. Make sure that your technicians understand what it is your business is doing for their benefit by being part of QualityPro.



While they should fully understand the exam requirement, they may not see all the back-office policies that make your company one of the best in the industry. QualityPro offers an array of tools and resources specifically to post or use around the office for this purpose, but it's worth explaining what steps you've taken to standardize and professionalize your operations. We recommend showing off the QualityPro Company Presentation slides or presentation video as part of your onboarding process for employees who may not have worked for an accredited company before. These resources are available at QualityProTools.org.

Working for a QualityPro company is an opportunity for employees to gain forward momentum with their career through a company that cares about fostering an environment of success at the personal and professional levels. Employees recognize the investment that you are making in their success, and will carry that same investment forward through their interactions with each other, with clients, and with the industry as a whole. 

QualityPro is administered by the Foundation for Professional Pest Management, an independent organization that has been developing good business practices and standards since 2004. Designed specifically for pest management companies in the U.S. and Canada, we are proud to certify over 500 of the best companies in the pest management industry. QualityPro is endorsed by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). For more information, contact us at QualityPro@pestworld.org.

NPMA EVENT CALENDAR

	NPMA LEGISLATIVE DAY Mar 10–12, 2024 <i>Washington, D.C.</i>
	WOMEN'S FORUM May 7–9, 2024 <i>Atlanta, GA</i>
	WORKFORCE SUMMIT May 9–10, 2024 <i>Atlanta, GA</i>
	GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY SUMMIT June 4–6, 2024 <i>Miami Beach, FL</i>
	SAFETY SUMMIT June 6–7, 2024 <i>Miami Beach, FL</i>
	EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP FORUM June 11–13, 2024 <i>New Orleans, LA</i>
	NPMA ACADEMY July 16–18, 2024 <i>Orlando, FL</i>
	CAROLINAS/MID-ATLANTIC SUMMER CONFERENCE July 25–27, 2024 <i>Myrtle Beach, SC</i>
	PESTWORLD 2024 Oct 22–25, 2024 <i>Denver, CO</i>



GET TO KNOW AMANDA FORRESTALL

President
Pest-End, Inc.
Plaistow/NH/USA

How did you get started in the industry?

I got started in the pest industry at a very young age. When I was just 3 years old, my parents purchased Pest-End, and that's when my journey in this industry began.

Did you have any mentors along the way? Who, and how did they impact your career path?

I've been fortunate to have several mentors who significantly influenced my career path. Initially, my mom and aunt played pivotal roles as mentors when I first began working in the office. Their guidance, expertise and insights into the inner workings of the business were invaluable in shaping my understanding of the industry.

As I grew older, I discovered mentorship in friends who were committed to community service. Their dedication and leadership qualities served as a source of inspiration, guiding me not only in my professional pursuits but also in understanding the importance of giving back to the community. Moreover, my involvement with NPMA has been instrumental in expanding my network of mentors and colleagues. Through NPMA, I've had the privilege of connecting with experienced professionals who have generously offered their guidance and expertise. Building these relationships has provided me with a reliable support system and a wealth of professional advice.

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What was one of the best parties you've ever been to?

It was undeniably my 40th birthday celebration—it was a remarkable gathering where I found myself surrounded by a diverse mix of friends and family, each representing a significant part of my life over the past four decades.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Air popped popcorn, a glass of wine and a Hallmark movie.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

To fly a plane.

What's one thing you had to learn the hard way?

The importance of expecting the unexpected. As someone with a Type A personality who thrives on planning and structure, I've faced situations where unforeseen events disrupted my meticulously laid-out plans.

Describe your perfect day.

Waking up to the sounds of the ocean, surrounded by my family. We would spend the day outside enjoying each other's company. As the day ended, we would watch the sunset.

What is the weirdest way you've been injured?

I broke my arm falling over the handlebars of a bike.

What's your pet peeve?

Disorganization drives me crazy!

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

I say "apparently" way too much.

What entertainment are you bingeing right now?

Books! I am always reading something, from professional development to suspenseful novels to autobiographies.

Where was the best vacation you've ever taken?

My trip to Ireland and London. My husband, Brian, proposed while we were in London, and it was perfect.

And finally, what do you want to be when you grow up?

I'm not sure yet, but I am having a great time still trying to figure it out. ☺

What's the biggest learning experience you've had?

A standout pivotal moment was navigating the challenges of running a business during the pandemic. This period drastically elevated the expectations regarding adapting swiftly and mastering new protocols and policies. It emphasized the critical need to rapidly acquire and implement new skills and strategies to ensure the business's survival and success amidst unprecedented circumstances.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Cherishing small victories as they pave the way for greater achievements. This underscores the significance of acknowledging the incremental steps toward our goals, reminding us that they collectively form the foundation for success.

What life skill do you wish you had cultivated or were better at?

Effective communication and patience.

What are you most excited about these days?

Watching my team succeed and exceed the goals they set truly excites me professionally. Personally, watching my kids discover their passions in sports and activities gets me excited.

What's the best compliment you've ever received?

The most meaningful compliment is when someone acknowledges me as a good mom. I am blessed to have three children, Aubrey (8), Dylan (6), and Easton (4). They remind me to laugh, and seeing the world through their eyes is pure magic.

Describe yourself in three words?

Organized, kind and relatable.

What would your superpower be?

Definitely to be able to teleport.



We create chemistry

**Faster¹ discovery.
Faster consumption.
Faster termite elimination.**

**The annual termite baiting system that puts you in control
of termites and your business.**

For more information, contact your BASF sales representative or visit pestcontrol.basf.us

¹ 2012 University of Delaware, Graduate Research Dissertation

*Not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$; Statistically significant at $p < 0$.

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