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## WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR



# Strengthening Our Partnerships

By Marie Knox and Matt Shipp

During the past few years, the industry has experienced significant change, from new chemistries and control techniques, to new regulations and environmental safety measures. Despite these changes, termites remain a challenge for pest management professionals (PMPs), and Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) is glad to be a trusted partner in overcoming that challenge.

Because of our strong belief in partnerships, our ultimate goal is to be the best possible partner for our suppliers and customers. We strive to strengthen our partnerships with our distributors and customers every day. One way we do this is to consistently check in with our customers to make sure what we're developing fits their desires or needs. That feedback spurs our endeavors.

CSI, part of the ADAMA family of companies, employs and consults with some of the most talented formulation chemists in the world. We have access to more active ingredients globally than any other company. This unique situation allows us to improve on the products in the marketplace and deliver products to end users that are unlike anything else. In a competitive world of post-patent pesticides, CSI seeks ways to optimize formulations, providing maximum efficacy through improved dispersion, solubility and stability. In many cases, the formulation performs better than that of the basic manufacturer. CSI is also pursuing novel chemistry – somewhat atypical for a post-patent company.

Recently, CSI has launched a Combination Chemistry product development platform with the addition of FUSE Termiticide/Insecticide. Products developed based on this platform have a strong focus on multiple active ingredients with differing modes of action formulated into one unique product. When PMPs choose our products, whether current product lines or soon-to-be proprietary products, there is no compromise of price over quality. PMPs are adding value and a little more profit to their bottom line when they choose our products.

Additionally, CSI is expanding its formulating, warehousing and distributing capabilities at its 14-acre campus in Pasadena,

Texas. Our latest expansion involves a \$5.5 million investment to construct and equip a 120,000-sq.-ft. facility earmarked primarily for the storage of finished goods. About 20,000 sq. ft. of the project is designated for distribution offices and a staging area for shipments. This state-of-the-art facility reflects the care we put into producing quality products. How we maintain the facility and the processes we use to create our products reflect our intended quality.

Furthermore, we provide complete technical and sales teams to support our customers, as well as the industries and businesses in which we participate. We continue to add resources and experienced professionals to our product development and sales teams. We and the CSI territory managers are also available to PMPs for technical support. We are constantly asking for customer input because the voice of the customer is important to us. As we develop new, proprietary products, we want to make sure they are relevant and needed.

Our future is bright, and for that, we are grateful. We continue to be excited about the possibilities for us and our valued partners, yet we refuse to rest on what has already been accomplished. We are looking toward the future and working diligently to develop new and innovative Combination Chemistry-driven products. We have a strong and dedicated staff with multidisciplinary backgrounds to serve your needs. Our product development philosophy focuses on looking beyond basic product development toward innovative active ingredient combination possibilities, which we believe is the future of products for the pest management industry.

If you are a CSI partner already, thank you. We appreciate you. If you are looking into how we can serve you, welcome to our family. We look forward to growing together.

✦ Marie Knox is PCO technical manager, product development, Control Solutions Inc. She can be reached at [mknox@controlsolutionsinc.com](mailto:mknox@controlsolutionsinc.com).



Matt Shipp is vice president, Control Solutions Inc.





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# Treat them right

**By focusing on service, Superior Termite & Pest Management plans to have customers for life.**

BY **JOHN WALSH** | Contributing Editor

**M**ike Wilcox and his family are crystal clear about one thing when it comes to their business: It's paramount they treat their customers right. In doing so, they plan to have many of them for life.

Wilcox owns Pensacola, Fla.-based Superior Termite & Pest Management, which he founded in 1999. His son, Chris Rawson, is COO, and his wife, Angie Wilcox, is president. Their mission is to provide affordable termite and pest control services with superior customer service.

"We provide this superior service by focusing on each customer experience and need, ensuring each treatment is tailored to meet the needs of that family and home," Wilcox says. "We value everything it takes to create a superior customer experience: honesty, integrity, respect, courtesy and punctuality."

## IT STARTED IN THE GARAGE

Wilcox began his pest management career nearly 25 years ago with Sears Termite & Pest Control (aka All America Termite & Pest Control) as an inexperienced technician. He moved quickly through the ranks



**Superior's Mike Wilcox, Angie Wilcox and Chris Rawson.**

into management, leading the Pensacola office to No. 1 within the company. Promoted to regional manager, he moved to Arizona to help develop operations out West. After a few years, Wilcox brought his family back to his roots on the Gulf Coast. After working for a short time with a local company, he and his wife decided to take a leap of faith and start their own.

"The customer service at the company I was working for wasn't at a level I thought it needed to be," Mike Wilcox says. "I thought Angie and I could do it better."

"Like every company, we started from nothing," Angie Wilcox says. "We wanted to open a company based on the Christian values of honesty and integrity, and provide good value to our customers. I was working my job as a dental hygienist during the day and learning the pest control industry at night. We started the company in the back of our garage with four children at home."

"I can remember waking up in the morning and finding my mom asleep at our little computer desk in the corner of our garage," Rawson says.

Superior, which has 19 employees and annual revenue of more than \$1.5 million, has yet to advertise. Business is generated via word of mouth and reputation. The company is lean for the volume of work it does so it can pay employees — who stay with the company — well, Rawson says.

"We use technology to stay lean, which allows us to keep our family feel," he says. "It also lets us be more competitive with pay."



**Chris Rawson**  
inspects plumbing  
access points.

PHOTOS: MELISSA ARIEN RAWSON

## TREATING FOR TERMITES

The company is focused on termites and general household pests.

“We stopped at that until this year, when we’ll do residential mosquito control,” Rawson says. “We want to be experts on the pests we control. For example, Mike is an expert on wood-destroying organisms (WDO).”

Of Superior’s entire business, 60 percent is in the termite segment and 99 percent is residential. Mike Wilcox’s solid relationships with real-estate boards feed the termite side.

“We have a high renewal rate and many long-standing customers,” he says.

Wilcox applies an old-school philosophy to treating homes for termites.

“Companies have gotten away from inspecting and treating all entry points of houses to save money,” he says. “In doing so, a company will make \$2 million more a year because it’s not applying as much product and saving on labor. But I’m not going to play Russian roulette with people’s houses. Our customers trust us to keep termites out of their homes.

“A lot of technicians don’t have drills anymore, and some young technicians don’t even know about drills,” he adds. “Companies want to save money on labor, equipment and product, but we don’t take shortcuts at the customer’s expense. We also educate customers about different programs. We’re not doing anything special; we’re using the best products on the market and treating homes following the full treatment label.”

Wilcox cites a story about a house inspection to make his point clear. He pulled into the driveway of a home when a technician from another company was pulling out. The technician from the other company was there because the homeowner had a warranty. Wilcox was there because the house was for sale and a real-estate company requested his services for a WDO inspection. He went into the garage, which contained tables and furniture, and noticed it looked like the homeowner was ready for a yard sale.

“I’m standing there, and I look at the corner of the garage and notice something that looked like termite damage, so I went over, popped off a baseboard and saw termites behind it,” he says. The other company had not taken that extra step of moving furniture aside to take a look.

Wilcox takes customer satisfaction a step further and says Superior will even take a hit on the chin to retain long-term customers.

“Our approach is to address every entry point,” he says. “We won’t do auto renewals; we’ll do an inspection before we collect money for a renewal.”

Superior’s technicians are trained not only to look for termites, but to identify any contributing factors that might make a home or property conducive or vulnerable to termite entry. They look for these factors before they make an initial treatment, and during the annual inspection and renewal process. A technician then reports any conducive conditions to the customer so problems can be addressed or fixed. Wilcox prides his company on these thorough, annual inspections, which are conducted outside and in. But he says not all companies inspect this way.

“Some companies offer a 10- to 15-percent discount if they don’t have to come out and do an inspection,” he says. “But you have to pry and poke. You have to be a little invasive. We won’t do an inspection unless we have access inside and outside the home. It’s a little difference in philosophy.

“At the same time,” he adds, “your customers have to want your help. We need to educate customers much more than just selling them a termite job. It’s all about how we can help customers.”

Superior puts a priority on customer education, especially for those who move to Florida from others parts of the country and aren’t familiar with termites and the severe damage they can cause.

“Termites do more damage to homes in Florida than fires and natural disasters combined,” Wilcox says. “It’s just something you do; you protect your house from termite pressure. We do everything

in our power to take care of our customers. We take care of our customers if they have damage. We do that, and they’re customers for life.”

The final, yet important component of that care, Wilcox says, is having a warranty that’s easy to read.

## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

For the past 13 years, the office has been fully web-based and integrated to improve workflow and manage customers. But Rawson admits the company



This garage header beam has such an active termite infestation that a pen easily slips through.

**“We need to educate customers much more than just selling them a termite job.”**



hadn't been taking full advantage of its industry software technology until recently because of how much the company is growing. Adding to its one small office, the company will be building a new one, which means it has a lot of ground to cover serving Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, as well as the greater Crestview area.

After working as project manager for a software company, Rawson returned to the family business in April to help analyze and grow it. His mission has been to update the company's brand, improve its online presence, and implement and integrate software to optimize its operations and improve customer service.

Superior's online presence has improved during the past six months as a result of working with web designers to build an attractive website that's optimized for search engines. It even allows Realtors to order their WDO inspections online.

By using technology such as tablets and up-to-date software, Rawson has modified the company's operations so it's not using as much paper. With all of the technology implementations and upgrades, he estimates the company has saved close to \$500 a month as a result of all its efficiencies — not including gas savings, wear and tear on trucks, and the hours of productivity improvements.

For example, technicians don't have to return to the office during the day; they can be out in the field with customers. By implementing technology, Wilcox can focus more on training technicians two hours a day, instead of having to catch up when he returns to the office. He has access to everything in the office in his truck, and can handle calls and employee questions in between his normal appointments. Wilcox also spends one day every other month teaching WDO basics at the Pensacola Association of Realtors.

## Superior's tips from the trenches

### MARKETING

- Focus on customers. Multiple-service homes are key. Many times technicians get used to seeing these customers as termite-only, for example, and forget to discuss other services with them.
- A company's online presence needs to be strong. Ads are great, but growing your presence organically is more important.
- Spend some money on community organizations, such as athletic clubs, high schools and youth team sports.

### NETWORKING

- Networking should be a topic with all employees, who should be encouraged to talk to everyone when they're out and about. Also encourage them to become involved in the community as a representative of the company.
- Join — and be active in — the local chamber of commerce.
- Realtors are your best friends.

### TECHNICAL TIPS

- Inspect the problem areas thoroughly to determine mode of entry, so the correct treatment strategy can be selected to treat effected areas.
- All equipment should be well maintained and in good operating condition, so chemicals can be correctly applied according to the label at all times.
- Thorough annual inspections must be done as part of the renewal of the warranty.

### SAVING TIME

- Do it right the first time. Focus on quality, not quantity, and you won't have to return until next year.
- Use software to optimize technicians' routes.
- Inspecting equipment monthly will help ensure technicians don't have problems while on a job.
- Saving time doesn't always mean finishing fast.

—Chris Rawson

Rawson's technology-focused role has allowed his parents to move the company forward, as opposed to just getting by every day. And thanks to Rawson, Superior now has an advertising budget.

"It's small, but we have one," he says. "Advertising will open doors that didn't exist for us before.

"I'm excited to hire more local people and have an impact on the lives of our employees and customers," he adds. "If we treat employees right, they'll treat the customers right."

That philosophy is proving effective: Superior's retention rate on termite renewals is more than 90 percent. **PMP**

Contact **WALSH** at [jwalsheditor@gmail.com](mailto:jwalsheditor@gmail.com).





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The science behind **FUSE®** Termiticide/Insecticide

Combination Chemistry - The formulation technology where CSI strives to combine multiple active ingredients with various modes of action into a single formulated product. **FUSE®** Termiticide/Insecticide combines the power of two non-repellent active ingredients: Imidacloprid for effective termite control and Fipronil for perimeter pest control applications. Both imidacloprid and fipronil act

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At CSI, our mission is to develop sustainable pest control formulations that improve the results – and the income potential – for the PMPs who use them. Introduce your customers to **FUSE** Termiticide/Insecticide, a new product containing two actives that are undetectable by termites and ants: imidacloprid and fipronil. FUSE is available in 137.5, 27.5 and 7.5 fl. oz. bottles.

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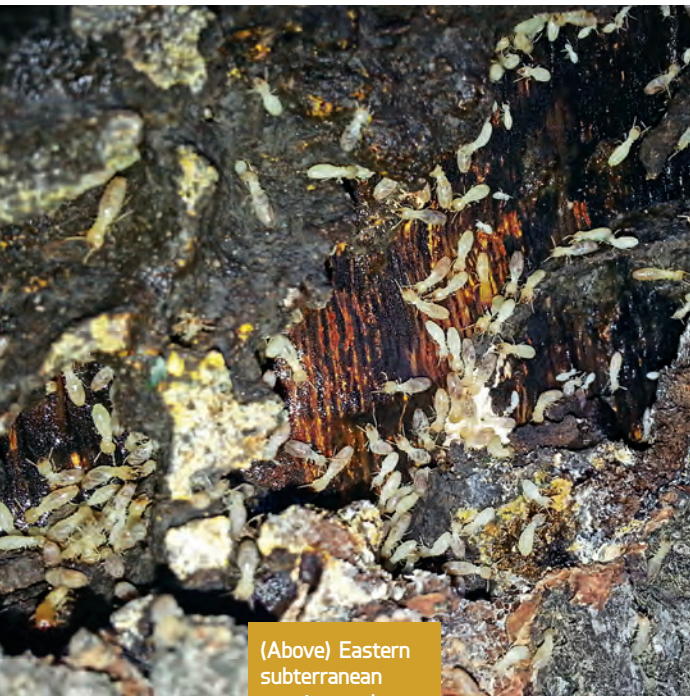
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# Simple Solutions



(Above) Eastern subterranean termite workers.  
(Below) Eastern subterranean swarmers.



**All Pest Solutions knows the name of the game with termite business is simplicity.**

BY **WILL NEPPER** | Senior Editor

**A**ll Pest Solutions in Wylie, Texas, is a family affair. Wendell Daniel, the patriarch of the Daniel clan, is president of the company. His wife, Natalie, is vice president and office manager, and their daughter, Amber, is her assistant. Their son, Jacob, is a technician and service manager.

In January 2004, when Wendell first opened All Pest, he'd already had plenty of industry experience as manager of one of the largest North Texas branches of a national chain. After that, he partnered with an independently owned pest management company in North Texas. That's when Jacob's involvement in the industry began.

"When I was 10 years old, I started riding in the truck with Dad," Jacob says. "My primary function was handing out flyers."

Despite his menial first assignments, his experience on his father's truck gave Jacob a taste for the business. On his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jacob took his licensing test, "and the rest is history," he quips.

Including the four members of the Daniel clan, All Pest employs 10 people. As a team, they service properties targeting all household insect pests, most major species of rodents, and wildlife — not to mention chiggers, fleas, mosquitoes and, of course, termites.

All Pest deals with the Eastern subterranean species most often, although Jacob says they had their first run-in with a Formosan termite in North Dallas a few years ago. Although the pest remains the same, All Pest has experienced changes in its approach to termite business over the years.

## THE WAY WE WERE

In the termite realm, not all changes come in the form of technique in the trenches. Some changes,





(Left to right)  
 Jacob Daniel,  
 Amber Daniel,  
 Natalie Daniel and  
 Wendell Daniel.

like pricing and sales, are less of a choice than they are a necessary part of an evolution generated by outside influences, such as economics and — especially in the case of termite work — the housing market.

“The termite market has evolved into a buyers’ market,” Jacob says. “More than before, pricing is dictated by the competition. The days of our full-treatment services have gone away, opening a major price fluctuation among other PMPs.”

Jacob and Wendell maintain that to remain competitive, All Pest’s termite service prices are similar to what they were in the 1990s.

“We saw a major dip in sales during the subprime crisis,” Jacob says. “The housing market crash hindered all sales, obviously to the tune of consumers’ severe lack of disposable income.”

During that time, All Pest saw no loss of service efficacy despite delivering smaller treatments.

“We applied less service by spot treatments and home warranties,” Wendell says. “We countered the loss of cash flow up front for long-term sales with routine inspections and multiple treatment options for customers, so they could pick the exact service that fit their budget.”

## SELLING SIMPLICITY

All Pest credits its simple approach to business management as a key to success.

## All Pest Solutions’ Training Tips

- Train your technicians to sell *and* provide termite service. This cuts down on short-term tech turnover during a light service season.
- Focus on leaving no stone unturned in inspections.
- Teach trainees the statistics behind termite treatments, and give them access to historical termite data. Better-informed techs can answer customers’ questions more knowledgeably.
- Rushing termite training makes for headaches down the road. A new tech is far more likely to miss key areas.
- Try hiring technicians who *don’t* have years of experience. They won’t have to break bad habits from previous jobs, and you can sculpt them into the type of technician you want working for you.

—Wendell Daniel

“We try to employ the KISS — keep it simple, stupid — method when it comes to the business side of things,” Jacob says. This is especially true when it comes to customer contracts, he adds.

“It’s best to be brief, but specific on any contract,” Wendell says. “Customers shy away from long, drawn-out contracts because they suspect those are the contracts that provide the company they’re hiring every possible out if a job goes wrong or is ineffective.”

“But we think it’s important to list on the contract all application areas and methods that will be used on the job,” Jacob adds. “It’s about providing the customer with the rhyme and reason behind the service we’re performing, and the methods we’re using.”

Keeping it simple and brief isn’t always easy, but one strategy employed by All Pest is using a singular contract for all customers. Then the contract is like a menu from which customers can choose their service.

“It’s much better than having six or eight contracts,” Wendell says. “It simplifies the process for the consumer and eliminates that feeling of sales pressure tactics being used.”

## TECHNICIANS AND TECHNOLOGY

Recently, All Pest had made an important change in its management technology.

“We’re now in our second year of our new tablet-managed scheduling system with our proprietary software,” Jacob says. “We recently unleashed our new all-tech 2.0 platform with website integration.”

Technician-managed routes were becoming a management nightmare for the company, so after several years of research and development, the team was able to construct a platform that integrates tech-managed routes with office scheduling.

“It also allows our techs to check out chemical product from our inventory, which helps us keep an eye on our greatest expenses,” Jacob says. “Our goal is to go paperless, hopefully within the next year.”

But success hinges less on having the latest and greatest, and more on having the *right* tools for the job. In the office and field, Wendell is adamant

about equipping his employees with whatever they need to get the job done right the first time.

“You have to plan to provide tools and equipment when techs ask for them,” he adds. “Customers notice quality equipment, and see it not only as proof of quality service — it also shows them your company isn’t a fly-by-night operation. They know your company is here to stay.”

“Also, happy technicians perform better,” Jacob adds. “When they have the equipment they need to do the job right, they’re happy. It eliminates a certain amount of frustration in the field and narrows the margin for error.”

**“When technicians have the equipment to do the job right, they’re happy.”**



Jacob Daniel demonstrates a trench back-fill and cover application.

## All Pest Solutions' Tech Tips

- Never send one technician to do a termite job. If you do, you won't have the same spirit of teamwork and accountability, and technician fatigue is likely to become a factor in diminished quality. All Pest always sends a service manager with the technician to every termite job.
- When it comes to chemical solutions, the label is the law. Period.
- Collect as much information about the structure from customers as possible. Ask them about previous treatments and possible moisture problems.
- Cross-train technicians. It makes target pest identification much easier. A suspect termite swarm might actually be an ant swarm, for example. This can be handled on the spot, which saves you time and the customer money.
- Try to keep the technician or manager who sold a termite job with that particular job from beginning to end. Customers like to see and communicate with the same person who generated the service.

—Jacob Daniel

Wendell recognizes that in pest management, sometimes the best equipment is expensive, but still necessary.

“The cost must be anticipated and accounted for,” he says. “And by operating under that philosophy, our business has yet to see a loss: We show consistent growth year after year.” PMP

You can reach NEPPER at [wnepper@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:wnepper@northcoastmedia.net) or 216-706-3775.





Billy Black uses a moisture meter as an additional termite inspection tool.

# Old traditions combine with new technologies

**W.E. Black Termite & Pest Control makes money the old-fashioned way — they earn it.**

BY **HEATHER GOOCH** | Managing Editor

One of the best things Billy Black ever did, he contends, was leave Anderson, S.C. Another one of the best things he ever did? He returned to Anderson, S.C. Today he runs W.E. Black Termite & Pest Control with four termite technicians, five general pest technicians, four office staffers and an 8,000-sq.-ft. headquarters. (We'd be remiss if we didn't point out that he also met and married his wife, with whom he has two sons, in Anderson.)

Like South Carolina, pest control has been in Black's blood his whole life. His father, the late Bill Sr., worked

as a tech for a national company in the mid-1960s until he decided he could do it better himself. From 1968 until Bill Sr. sold the company in 1988, Inter-state Termite & Pest Control Inc. was a family affair — with his wife as bookkeeper and young Billy by his side learning the trade on weekends and after school.

The oldest of the four Black children, Billy is the only one in the pest management business. And even then, there was a period when he thought it wasn't for him.

"I left Anderson and worked my way up in fitness club management," he says. "In the early 1990s, that industry consolidated and changed a great deal. I left it to work at AT&T in their small-business department for a couple years, and then Dad said, 'Why not open a pest control business?'"

With his background in customer service and fond memories of being a young technician, Black agreed. His father helped him reactivate his license,



From left are Jason Brown, general manager; Sean Courneen, pest/termite technician; Billy Black, and T.J. Cason, senior termite technician.

comes in.' He shook my hand and from that point on, he gave me a lot of business."

W.E. Black's business is 85 percent residential and 15 percent commercial. On the termite side, pretreats comprise only about 10

percent of business because Black's experience too often has been with builders looking at price over quality. The few builders with whom he does work meet high industry standards, Black adds.

## EVERYONE'S IN SALES

Black says he believes that regardless of the industry, every employee is a salesperson at some level.

"The other companies drive the same trucks and use the same tools, but it's the people who make the difference," he adds. "It's about having a good relationship with customers, regulation inspectors and distributors. We all have to work hand in hand."

Black runs his company the way his father did.

"Be honest and take care of people, but still make a profit," he says. "Dad's contracts were simple and open-ended. I've taken the same basic contract and expanded it to reflect updated regulations and codes. It takes care of not only the customer, but the business, too."

Price also comes into play in an unusual way for W.E. Black. If there's a company-wide increase in service price, it only affects new customers.

"People have told me I'm leaving money on the table, but over the years, these customers have carried me," Black says, noting that as older customers move out of the area, new customers tend to take their place.

Other business lessons Black has learned throughout his decades in pest management include:

- **Today's customers are more educated than ever.** Maybe it's the Internet, maybe it's prior experience with termite infestation, maybe it's secondhand info from a friend or family member, but regardless the source, Black's technicians are often inundated with questions and comments by customers following them around on the job — and he doesn't mind one bit.

which was originally issued in 1978 after high school. His mother helped with the books, and by August 1993, Black's business was up and running — out of a spare bedroom in his home.

It wouldn't be a house-based business for long, however. Black contends that was due, in part, to his father's reputation around town.

"One day Dad said to me, 'Do you realize some people see your company name and think it's me getting back in business?'" he recalls. "I said, 'Not only do I know that, it's why I did it.'"

## BACK IN BLACK

Black wasn't trading on his father's good name alone, however. "I lost a lot of business by not compromising my standards," he recalls. "I would sit and wonder, 'Should I have cut my prices just to get the account?' But I knew that once you do it, you have to continue to do it."

Black needn't have worried. Customers wanting quality service soon began to notice him.

"A Realtor who had worked with Dad years before saw I was in business, and figured I was hungry for any job I could get," he says. "He asked me to look at a house with moisture problems, and I told him it was going to be \$175 to treat."

"Gee, that's awfully high, can't you come down a bit?" he asked me," Black continues. "I said, 'Look, I have a code to meet. I have to clean the debris, especially because you have guys painting and nailing all over the house.' He said he needed someone to stand behind the work, and I told him, 'I will. That's where the \$175

**"Be honest and take care of people, but still make a profit."**





“A properly educated customer is our best customer,” he says, noting his technicians receive training to help ensure the information their customers receive is correct.

● **Word of mouth is the best advertising.** “It keeps you going like nothing else,” Black says. In fact, his goal with a recent billboard campaign wasn’t to attract new customers as much as it was to get existing customers to see the sign and have a casual conversation — and recommendation — with friends and neighbors.

● **Unhappy customers don’t always talk ... to you.** “How many times have you been out to eat and you don’t get a drink refill? You’re waiting on the check 10 minutes? Maybe you’ll give the restaurant another chance, but you’re not going to go out of your way to recommend it to anyone,” he says, noting the parallel to pest management service. “If you’re not taking care of Mrs. Jones, she’s not going to tell Mr. Smith to call us.”

● **Don’t waste time on no-budget customers.** “As far as I know, we are the only company that lists our service prices right on our website,” Black says. “It weeds out folks who are looking only for the cheapest price. They can go with the cheapest, and once that doesn’t work, then they’ll call us.”

## TECHNICAL TRAINING

When Bill Sr. was doing pest control in the 1970s and 1980s, he trained someone until he felt the tech knew what needed to be done. Today, South Carolina technicians have to complete verifiable training before they’re allowed to be alone in a company vehicle. W.E. Black goes a step further, ensuring each new technician has ridden with every other technician at least once.

“The training period takes about six to 12 weeks,” Black says.

His other then-vs.-now observations include:

● **The spacings, they are a’shrinkin’.** In the 1970s, a termite tech drilled his termiticide holes 36 in. apart. When Black started his company in 1993, the label required 24 in. spacing. Today, it’s 12 in. apart. “I’m waiting for the labels to say 6 in.,” he says with a chuckle.

● **Technology’s great, but you still have to crawl under the house.** “There’s no substitute for a human inspection,” he says. “The termite-trained dogs might be able to sniff out a problem, but they can’t give you specs about the house and recommend the right strategy.”

● **On the other hand, technology’s great.** Black is pleased with many innovations in termite control, and he’s particularly grateful for the availability and accuracy of moisture meters: “When Dad was in business, he had to eyeball it — *‘This is my opinion, based on experience.’* Today, we can back it up with data.”

## My, how times have changed

**W**hile Billy Black is old enough to recall treating termite accounts with chlordane, he’s glad to be in the industry at a time when safe, yet effective, treatment options are available.

“When I was in high school, we used to do dirt-filled porches, using a sledgehammer and chisel to knock out brick and then dig out the dirt with a small shovel,” Black says. “You’d then flood it with termiticide. Today, we have high-powered rotary hammer drills that make our jobs a lot easier.”

The memories came “flooding” back recently when one of Black’s technicians went on a wood-destroying organism house inspection (known as a CL-100 in South Carolina) for a real-estate deal, but then the deal fell through. By the time the next buyer was ready for an inspection, the CL-100 had expired. Black’s original technician was away, so he decided to do the inspection himself.

“It was an older house,” he says. “I looked over the form and saw we had checked the block and there was ‘No visible evidence of prior treatment.’”

But then, Black encountered three dirt-filled porches. Upon closer inspection, he saw evidence that areas had been voided.

“I had to change the letter to say there *had* been visible evidence of prior treatment,” he says.

Black called the state regulatory department to find out whether his technician was in the wrong. Having only been on the job five years, should the tech be expected to recognize a treatment from 40 years ago? The official response was no, it was an understandable oversight.

Still, it led to Black training his team about what a previously voided area looks like.

“The liability is kind of scary,” he says. “Think about people who open termite companies coming from the construction and landscaping fields, and the things they don’t know about termite treatment.

“That old saying about how it’s better to beg forgiveness than to ask permission doesn’t wash with termite control,” Black continues. “You’d better ask for permission regardless. I always look at what the worst-case scenario is, and work my way back from there. That way, you usually don’t have any problems, and there’s no need for forgiveness.” —H.G.

Black’s not sure whether his two sons will go beyond their high school and college summers in the pest control business. He’s not pressuring them. He had to find his way back to it on his own. If it’s meant to be, he says, they will, too.

“I love this industry,” Black concludes. “Just like any industry, there are a few bad apples. But the good, honest and strong survive.” **PMP**

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