PestManagement

2014 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

Chomping at the bit

Spurred on by an improving economy, PMPs are hitting their stride and ready to race into 2014.

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Steve Levy President & CEO, Bell Laboratories

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Stories by Dan Jacobs based on the 2014 PMP magazine State of the Industry survey. Contact Dan at jacobs3927@sbcglobal.net.

ON THE COVER: Photo by Martial Colomb/Photodisc/Getty Images

Full Speed Ahead

PMPs are looking to build on the success of 2013 and grow their businesses in the coming year.

ome pest management professionals (PMPs) began the year leery about a lingering weak economy, but most quickly shook those fears — and gladly galloped into 2013.

That sentiment is reflected in gross revenue: In *Pest Management Professional*'s (*PMP*'s) 2014 State of the Industry (SOI) survey, several more PMPs expect to top the \$1 million mark than did in 2012.

Most respondents to the SOI survey remain optimistic about the future. Nearly nine in 10 respondents (87%) indicated they're very or somewhat optimistic heading into 2014. That figure mirrors last year's survey responses, though fewer PMPs said they're very or somewhat pessimistic.

That optimism is reflected in a number of ways: More than 62 percent of PMPs increased their equipment budgets from 2012 to 2013. Another 33



WHO RESPONDED?

- 87% are somewhat or very optimistic about their 2014 business outlook.
- 82% have a relatively or very healthy pest management industry in their market.
- **59%** indicate house mice are the most prevalent rodent pest.
- **38%** expect to finish 2013 with \$1 million in revenue or more.
- **28%** live in the Southeast region.
- **13%** have been in business five years or less.

percent kept their budgets flat. In nearly every category, the percentage of PMPs planning on purchasing new products this year went up when compared to last year.

Many respondents shared their plans for the coming year, which revealed several common themes: It's time to offer customers

- additional services. • Volatile weather is contributing
- to more cyclical insect activity and sales.
- Green services are becoming more popular.
- New building construction and residential housing improvement rates are picking up again.

Top pest calls include bed bugs, rodents, ants, termites, cockroaches, fleas, ticks and birds.

Some challenges remain

Labor issues continue to be a problem for pest management companies. But some have learned to take advantage of other challenges. The past few years have forced companies to run leaner. Many learned how to get more done with fewer employees.

Many appear less worried about consumer confidence than last year. In our 2013 SOI survey, several PMPs indicated consumer confidence was a key concern. *Not one respondent* expressed that concern in the 2014 SOI survey.

PMPs are taking advantage of improving confidence, and the confidence is contagious. **PMP**



What's bugging your customers?

ed bugs, ants, cockroaches, fleas, ticks and rodents remain the top growth opportunities, but an expected surge in termites means PMPs could be tapping into an old revenue stream.

Several pests provided growth opportunities for our readers this year. PMPs expect bed bugs, ants, termites, fleas, ticks, rodents and cockroaches to provide the biggest increase of revenue, according to the *Pest Management Professional (PMP)* 2014 State of the Industry survey. Almost half of the respondents to the SOI survey expect their bed bug revenue to increase this year compared to last. Of that figure, 15 percent of PMPs expect more than 25 percent growth for the pest. Rodents and ants continue to offer excellent revenue streams for PMPs. Almost 39 percent of PMPs expect their ant revenue to increase more than 10 percent, while 20 percent expect their rodent revenue to rise by the same margin.

When asked which pests will provide an opportunity heading into 2014, one reader's response was, "All of them. A lot of people are putting off taking care of pest problems, leaving them to grow significantly and creating even more."

And while having the traditional structural pests might be comforting for PMPs, some worry government interference could mean some of the tools they use to treat those pests might be taken away. The PMPs who can adapt, along with changing

BED BUGS STILL BITING THIS YEAR

23% of PMPs expect their gross bed bug revenue to increase by more than 25%. Another 39% of PMPs expect their bed bug revenue to jump between 10% and 25%.

regulations, technologies and techniques, will continue to grow.

It's all about the bugs. Whether it's climate change (as one respondent suggested), government regulations that restrict pesticides that can be used in and around homes, invasive species spreading their range or some as-yet-unidentified culprit, it seems bug populations are increasing. That continues to be a source of comfort for PMPs throughout the country. **PMP**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

What is your business outlook for 2014?



Describe the state of the pest management industry in your market.

	2014 SOI	2013 SOI	2012 SOI
Very healthy	26%	27%	16%
Relatively healthy	56%	47%	54%
Flat	14%	18%	21%
Slightly down	1%	5%	8%
Down significantly	3%	3%	1%

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY **REPORT**

A continually strengthening economy prods PMPs to be excited about building on the successes they achieved in 2013.

idway through 2013 you might have heard a collective sigh of relief, as thousands of pest management professionals (PMPs) throughout the country started realizing the economy is on the mend. And while they might not be ready to race with unbridled passion into 2014, PMPs are optimistic and enthusiastic about the coming year. That sentiment is reflected in the *Pest Management Professional (PMP)* 2014 State of the Industry survey.

Kunnig for the

It seems PMPs generally agree with what most economic reports say. The economy is getting better. Most business owners are happy with the health of the industry in their markets. About 82 percent selected "very healthy" or "relatively healthy" when asked to describe their view of the industry in their markets. That figure has gone up in each of the past two years. In 2011, only 70 percent answered similarly, and in 2012, that figure was 74 percent. Another 14 percent felt the state of pest management in their area was "flat," while about 4 percent indicated their markets were "slightly down" or "significantly down."

Many PMPs expressed an interest in building on the growing consumer confidence by expanding their services and/or acquiring smaller operations. While growth is in the plans, it will come while business owners are keeping things under control.

Despite the good news, there are still expected hurdles. New regulations and healthcare concerns made regular appearances on the list of obstacles. PMPs also are worried about cash flow, the possibility the economy could turn sour again, rising fuel costs and finding quality employees. Additionally, the president's name appeared many times on the list of concerns for the coming year.

On the other hand,

many PMPs are excited about the opportunities 2014 might bring. Several pests made the list, but there were many other items that showed reason for optimism. Many PMPs have seen improvements in the housing market, the need for green pest management services and technology. Others are looking to offer new service lines vegetation control and bed bug treatment, to name two.

A deeper shade of green

One service that continues to grow is green pest management. About 60 percent of survey respondents indicated they offer green pest management solutions when only 40 percent offered such programs

RIDING HIGH

How many years has your company been in business?



How many employees do you have?





two years ago. While companies continue to add green products and services to their offerings, the bulk of their revenue still comes from more traditional means. Only 9.3 percent of PMPs indicated more than 50 percent of their revenue comes from green pest management programs. That number is climbing slowly compared with previous years, when almost 70 percent said less than 10 percent of their revenue was derived from green programs. Green services, markets and products made several appearances in the response to the question, "What

do you see as the top opportunity for your company in 2014?"

Spending

When the economy slumps, conventional wisdom says business owners will hold onto their equipment longer. A repaired tool might not be as good as a new one, but in the short term, it can be cheaper. According to the survey, PMPs were much more optimistic about 2013 than they were with 2012, but actions speak louder than words.

When asked how their equipment spending budgets changed from 2012 to 2013, less than 5 percent said they spent less this year compared to last year.

About one-third kept their budgets flat, and the rest spent more on equipment this year than they did in 2012. To narrow that further, 5 percent of PMPs increased their equipment spend by more than 25 percent. One-quarter increased their spending budgets 10 percent to 25 percent, and onethird increased spending less than



TOOLS OF THE TRADE What PMPs are Buying

Equipment Type	% purchase in 2013	% purchase in 2012
Insecticides	83	81
Bait stations	78	64
Safety equipment	72	66
Uniforms	72	73
Traps	64	58
Spray nozzles	60	33
Backpack sprayers	58	37
Spray guns	55	32
Dusters	52	37
Trucks	52	44
Vehicle accesories	52	45
Computers	50	36
Monitors	49	51
Bait guns/applicators	47	39
Green products	44	31
Spray pumps	44	31
Spray hoses	40	42
Aerosol applicators	39	35
Granual spreader	39	24
Business software	38	27
Handheld devices (PDAs, etc.)	33	34
Compressed air sprayers	29	30
Termite bait installation tools	27	22
GPS systems/software	26	22
Hose reels	26	19
Foggers	22	27
Spray rig	22	24
Subcontracted services	22	19
Bird/animal repellers	21	14
Consultants	13	13
Trailers	12	11
Foam machines	10	9
Soil & tree injectors	9	5
Alternative fuel vehicles	2	9

10 percent. For almost every item listed in the 2014 SOI survey, the percentage of PMPs purchasing those products increased when compared with the past two years.

As PMPs race to 2013's finish line, they're thinking optimistically about the coming year. Product purchasing looks to climb in 2014. While there are still a few hurdles to clear, it's obvious PMPs are less worried about the next lap around the track than they were this one. **PMP**

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Spotlight: Ants

PMPs are crazy about ants.

ed bugs have been the media darlings of the pest management world for the past several years, but ants are making a play to take away some of the headlines. Do a quick scan of pest news on the Web, and you'll find stories such as: "Crazy ant species moves into South Louisiana" and "Invasion of the Tawny Crazy Ants on Southeast Texas" and "Meet the fire ants' crazy new enemy."

ANT REVENUE

By what percent do you expect your ant management revenue to change from 2012 to 2013?



Carpenter, odorous house and pavement ants were the three most cited as structural and nuisance pest ants, according to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). There are more than 700 ant species found in the U.S., although only about 25 species commonly infest homes, according to the NPMA. But it's the tawny crazy ant (*Nylanderia fulva*) that has captured consumer attention.

Previously known as the Rasberry crazy ant because of Tom Rasberry, the PMP who discovered them in 2002, the tawny crazy ant doesn't bite or sting. Instead, it overwhelms the areas it invades with sheer numbers. The ants are 1/8-in. long and reddish-brown. Their colonies can have multiple queens and can measure in the millions.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida (UF/IFAS) offers the following tips for tawny crazy ant control. Although 100 percent eradication of this ant isn't probable in areas where the pest is established, population suppression is possible. Expect the ants to reinvade.
Multiple control tactics will be required, including baiting the grounds and performing perimeter treatments. Product selection is critical to success.

Scientists estimate there are over

earth at any given time. Source: Ask.com

a quadrillion ants living on

Some products are better at excluding ants from structures. Whether it's the

tawny crazy ant. fire ant or another species, most PMPs expect ant management revenue to increase. As part the PMP 2014 State of the Industry survey, PMPs were asked, "By approximately what percent do you expect your gross revenue to change from 2012 to 2013 for the following pests?" More than 9 percent of respondents expect their ant management revenue to increase by more than 25 percent. Another 30 percent expect their revenue from ant work to increase between 10 to 25 percent. Fewer than 3 percent expect their revenue from ant work to decrease. It's little wonder, when they were asked, "Which pest do you think will make the biggest resurgence in 2014?" PMPs said ants, second only to bed bugs. PMP





Spotlight: Bed Bugs

These tiny bloodsuckers continue to infuse revenue.

hroughout the country, students heading back to the classroom this fall are carrying books, backpacks — and bed bugs. Bed bugs in schools (or hospitals, hotels, offices, movie theaters, public transportation, etc.) isn't exactly news to pest management professionals (PMPs). Yet it seems

the word is only getting out to the public more recently.

According to the National Pest Management

Association (NPMA), 99.6 percent of PMPs in the U.S. have encountered a bed bug infestation during the past year. That figure increased from 95 percent in 2012. Before 2000, only 25 percent of respondents had encountered a bed bug infestation. They also report infestations have increased in the majority of locations in which PMPs typically treat for bed bugs.

Bed bugs were one of the most popular responses to two questions on the Pest Management Professional (PMP) 2014 State of the Industry survey — "What do you see as the top opportunity for your company in 2014?" Which pest do you think will make the biggest resurgence in 2014? There are two other bed bug issues of

which PMPs have been taking note. One, reports of bed bugs seem to peak during the summer months, which is when the most travel happens. And two, it should come as no surprise, litigation involving bed bugs continues to rise. Some states, according to a press release from BedBug Central, have passed legislation

of companies report paying bed bug technicians \$16—\$20 per hour.

putting the onus on property managers for the treatment of bed bugs. In other states, many landlords try to

put the burden on the tenants, which can cause problems.

"Passing the cost of treatment off to tenants via the lease is a legal ticking time bomb," says Jeff White, research entomologist and technical director of BedBug Central and an expert on bed bug litigation. "There will be a lot of attention paid to property managers who haven't handled things properly and multiple tenants who have suffered the consequences as a result. During the next two years, it's going to be a complete circus when it comes to bed bug litigation and property management."

Seize opportunities

A host of new products entered the market during the past year, for PMPs. Along with legitimate

BED BUG REVENUE

By what percent do you expect your bed bug management revenue to change from 2012 to 2013?



Note: 0% reported bed bug management revenue dropped 10% to 25%

TOP DESTINATIONS FOR BED BUGS **FOR 2013**

The cities and metropolitan areas with the highest increase in bed bug calls:



technologies and techniques, there are a number of shysters peddling snake oil to unwitting consumers. Still, this obstacle is an opportunity for PMPs: When ineffective or dangerous over-the-counter products fail to solve problems and allow them to get worse, consumers will need to reach out to professionals even more. **PMP**



Spotlight: Cockroaches

This perennial and pervasive pest shows no sign of going away.

he shudders of fear and disgust were almost palpable as homeowners throughout the country read the headline: "Over a million cockroaches escape from cockroach farm." Fortunately for Americans, the great escape happened in China. Nonetheless, homeowners kept watch for the domestic pests. Although there are more than 4,000 species of cockroaches throughout the world and about 50 in the U.S.. only four (or six, depending on where you live) typically become pests.

Cockroaches are hardy insects that have been around since the time of the dinosaurs, and they can live almost a month without food and two weeks without water. The most common cockroach pest species include the American (Periplaneta americana), brown-banded (Supella longipalpa), German (Blattella germanica) and oriental (Blatta orientalis).

Cockroaches are a business staple for many PMPs

because the pest has the

ability to trigger the shutdowns of restaurants and other businesses. Additionally, one in five children in the U.S. has severe sensitivities to cockroach allergens, which increase the severity of asthma symptoms, according to The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS).

News like that means PMPs throughout the country should remain busy with cockroach work. And their responses to the Pest Management Professional (PMP) 2014 State of the Industry survey indicate they'll be doing precisely that:

■ More than 60 percent of respondents expect their cockroach management revenue to increase.

■ Almost one-quarter (24 percent) expect that increase to be at least 10 percent.

■ Bait stations (78%) and bait guns and applicators (47%) were among the more popular tools PMPs purchased this year.

While bed bugs have the well-known nighttime sendoff -"Good night, don't let the bed

COCKROACHES GET POLITICAL

Governor Chris Christie (R-N.J.) might just have a reason to like cockroaches. According to an article from NewJerseyNewsRoom.com, the New Jersey Pest Management Association held its 17th New Jersey Cockroach Derby, and the Chris Christie stand-in cockroach defeated Democratic opponent Barbara Buono's representative. For the complete article, visit:

www.newjerseynewsroom.com/state/3-reasons-chris-christie-loves-cockroaches.



ROACH REVENUE By what percent do you expect your cockroach revenue to change from 2012 to 2013?



bugs bite," cockroaches have infiltrated themselves far more into human culture. They appear in video games, literature, music and movies. And just in case you were wondering why anyone would *farm* cockroaches, the creatures are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Pulverized cockroach powder can bring as much as \$89 per pound. **PMP**



Spotlight: Rodents

The most common household pests continue to generate revenue for PMPs.

reen is good. Well, mostly good. Like many other industries, professional pest management has embraced the environmental movement. From automobiles to clothing to toys, more products are being made with natural or recycled products. And, as some are finding out, that can have unintended consequences.

For example, when one couple's car wouldn't start, they tried to find the cause. They learned that while soy-based wire insulation might be good for the environment, it provides a tasty meal for hungry rodents. Rodents and wires are a dangerous mix in general. Besides causing fires, rodents (in these cases, squirrels) have forced the closing of the NASDAQ trading system twice. In 1987 and 1994, squirrels were on the wrong wires, causing brief outages that delayed trading.

And when they're not eating wire insulation or committing electrically charged suicide, rodents destroy food sources. Rats destroy an estimated 20 percent of the world's food supply *every year*, directly by feeding and indirectly by contamination. A house mouse eats only 8 lbs. of food a year, but it can contaminate 10 times that amount by nibbling and discarding food.

Nice for mice

House mice remain the most prevalent rodent pest for pest management professionals (PMPs), according to the *Pest Management Professional* (*PMP*) 2014 State of the Industry survey. And many PMPs expect to see more of them in 2014 because rodents were one of the top responses to the question "Which pest do you think will make the biggest resurgence in 2014?"

Rodents are found throughout the world in almost every climate, including on the shores of the Arctic Ocean and

RODENT REVENUE

By what percent do you expect your rodent management revenue to change from 2012 to 2013?



in the warmest deserts. Rodents infest about 21 million homes in the United States each year, when the cold weather forces these pests to seek refuge indoors, according to an article from Thomas Pest Service in Albany, N.Y. That's a great opportunity for PMPs. **PMP**



Spotlight: Termites

Many PMPs expect their WDI work to grow substantially this year.

here will always be termites. That's one pest management professional's (PMP's) response to: "What do you see as the top opportunity for your company in 2014?" Not surprisingly, it also was the pest he expected to have the biggest resurgence next year. Written in all

caps, it almost reads like a cheer.

Termites are a close third among PMPs, behind bed bugs and ants regarding which

pest will make an impact on the industry. Fifty-five percent of PMPs expect their termite management revenue to increase this year compared to last. One in five believes termite work revenue will increase 10 percent to 25 percent, while 8 percent of PMPs expect related revenue to increase more than 25 percent. Only 7 percent expect their termite management revenue to decline.

There are more than 2,000 termite species in the world.

Although at least 50 of those exist in the U.S., only a few are considered to be key common structural pests. Those include Eastern subterranean (*Reticulitermes flavipes*), Formosan (*Coptotermes formosanus*), drywood (including *Incisitermes snyderi*), dampwood (Termopsidae) and conehead (*Nasutitermes corniger*), which are an invasive species from

of respondents describe themselves as termite control companies

the Caribbean. It was thought they were eradicated in 2003, but the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

(FDACS) found evidence of their return in Broward County, Fla. Subterranean species are the most common and can be found in every state. Each year, termites cause more than \$5 billion in property damage.

Weather has a huge impact on termites. In South Carolina, termite activity tends to slow down around September, but a humid summer will likely extend the season. News like that can be music to the ears of pest

DID YOU KNOW?

- Termites have been around since the Jurassic period.
- Termite colonies eat nonstop 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Termites have wings they shed once they find good places to build nests.
- Termites cause \$5 billion of damage annually.
- Termites are social insects and raise their young as a group.
- The total weight of all the termites in the world is more than the weight of all the humans in the world.

Source: National Pest Management Association

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THE GOING RATE

What does your company pay on average per hour for termite technicians?



TERMITE REVENUE

By what percent do you expect your termite management revenue to change from 2012 to 2013?



management companies. PMPs might have a huge opportunity for growing termite inspection work.

According to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), 38 percent of U.S. adults worry about discovering termites in their homes and 33 percent have or know someone who has experienced termite damage. Yet despite these concerns, more than half (52 percent) of Americans have never had their homes inspected for termites. **PMP**



Ready to Race into 2014

PMPs take stock of 2013 and share great expectations for the coming year.

est management professionals (PMPs) across the country just might be citing their versions of the Serenity Prayer as they head into 2014. The prayer asks for the ability to accept the things one can't change, the courage to change the things one can, and wisdom to know the difference.

2012

Pest Management Professional (PMP) asked PMPs their thoughts about various subjects as part of the publication's 2014 State of the Industry survey. Some of those issues are completely controlled by business owners, while others are outside their sphere of influence.

Staffing is always a concern for business owners. When asked about that issue, 18 percent of respondents selected it as one of their highest concerns. High taxes also were among PMPs' biggest concerns, with 39 percent selecting the highest concern option. Two issues that aren't among PMPs' biggest worries are making payroll (56 percent) and accounts payable (36 percent).

One common, ongoing concern is operating costs: 85 percent of PMPs expected their operating costs to increase compared with 2012. Almost one in 10 PMPs (8 percent) expects costs to increase more than 25 percent. Another 32 percent expect their costs to go up 10 percent to 25 percent. Almost half (45 percent) expect their operating costs to increase less than 10 percent.

When asked which issues would have had the biggest impact on their businesses this year, PMPs selected rising health-care costs, fuel prices, taxes, and increasing legislation, in descending order. Immigration/ illegal workers, lowball competitors and consumer confidence were the three issues PMPs expect have the least impact on their operations.

With those concerns in mind, PMPs were asked about their priorities for the next year. Growing the business, maintaining current business/

NET PROFIT & CUSTOMER RETENTION

What do you project your 2013 NET profit (profit after overhead and taxes) to be?



What is your customer retention rate so far this year?



FOLLOW THE MONEY

Which property types provided vou the most revenue in 2013?

Multi-family structures/HOA	10%
Commercial/industrial	. 19%
Government/institutional	5%



sources of revenue, and innovation (finding new ways to do business) were the top three priorities. One way to maintain current business is to retain current customers. It's far less expensive to maintain a customer than it is to find a new one. Almost one quarter (23 percent) of PMPs have been able to retain at least 95 percent of their employees. Another 32 percent of PMPs indicated they

> retrain at least 91 percent of their customers. Among the lowest priorities are cutting expenses, managing cash flow problems, and employee management (hiring, training, etc.).

PMPs were asked about their expected 2013 net profit (after overhead and taxes). Fifteen percent of PMPs expecting to earn less than 5 percent profit but, on the flipside, 15 percent of PMPs expecting to earn more than 25 percent net profit. **PMP**

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