

THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING TECHNICAL JOURNAL SINCE 1933

PMP Pest Management
PROFESSIONAL

DRIVEN to SUCCEED



**Pandemic-challenged PMPs
predict rising pest pressure,
revenue ahead**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY





PRODUCTS:

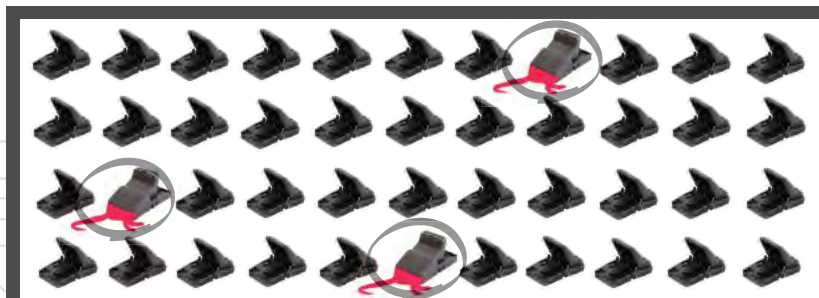
THE STANDARD IN RODENT CONTROL TECHNOLOGY



Provide rodent technology at a price that requires PMPs to use at every account:

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

AVAILABLE SOON IN



- PMPs without iQ™ check every trap.
- PMPs with iQ™ check only triggered traps.

WHICH PMP DO YOU WANT TO BE?

- PMPs without iQ™ don't know when rodents are entering bait stations.
- PMPs with iQ™ know when and where rodents are traveling and have the timestamps to prove it.

WHICH PMP DO YOU WANT TO BE?



GET THE FACTS. SOLVE THE PROBLEM
AND ELEVATE YOUR CUSTOMER'S
EXPERIENCE, AFFORDABLY.

Think rodent monitoring technology is too expensive
for your business? Contact your local distributor now to
find out exactly how **affordable** these products are.



For information go to:
www.bellsensing.com

Technology helps PMPs cruise into the new normal

When reflecting on 2020 and the current state of our industry, it is obvious we all have been presented with unique and varied challenges that impact our everyday lives. From a business perspective, normal operating procedures have been upended. Companies and organizations have had to quickly adapt to a changed environment, as well as disrupted routines.

How you adapt could determine your near-term and long-term success. Adjusting your business to meet the changing needs might involve instituting additional safety precautions, flexing work schedules, altering communications and looking for new tools to assist in navigating this new environment.

At Bell, our goal always will be to ensure pest management professionals (PMPs) have the tools they need for efficient and efficacious rodent control. One tool we offer that meets today's needs is the new line of iQ products. Powered by Bell Sensing

Technologies, the iQ product range takes popular Bell rodent control devices and outfits them with customized Bluetooth sensors, recording when and where rodents are active at an account.

In addition to transforming the unknown rodent activity at accounts to real, actionable data, iQ products enable you to monitor stations and traps in a socially distant — and in many instances, contactless — environment. iQ products have a Bluetooth range of 30 to 100 feet, so PMPs can detect whether rodent activity has occurred at an account even while standing outside the buildings and structures. With iQ's automated data gathering, keeping acceptable social distance in areas of high employee traffic is achievable.



BY STEVE LEVY

**President & CEO
Bell Laboratories**

For more information,
visit BellSensing.com

PMPs no longer are checking empty devices or bait stations without activity; they are instead focusing on treating the areas where rodent activity has been timestamped and recorded.

Innovations like Bell's iQ product line are intended to help you thrive in environments like we have today. Bell promises to make every effort to provide great rodent control solutions to our customers, and continuing our work in the ongoing fight against rodents. We appreciate your support and thank you for your business.

Stay safe and be well.



The iQ lineup includes Bell's 24/7 iQ trap, Express iQ trap, T-Rex iQ trap and the Ambush iQ trap.

iQ PRODUCTS
POWERED BY  **Bell**
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES



A WILD RIDE

Although a global pandemic kicked off 2020, pest management professionals (PMPs) have kept their foot on the gas, *Pest Management Professional's* (PMP's) 2021 State of the Industry survey responses show.

Deemed essential service providers early on by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, PMPs were able to continue to provide pest control to residential and commercial customers because they protect public health and property. Business increased for many PMPs, especially those with residential accounts they could service from outdoors.

"The pandemic didn't affect our residential accounts at all," says David Cooksey, CFO of McCall Service in Jacksonville, Fla. "If anything, it went up because people were



David Cooksey

staying home and seeing pest-related issues."

For McCall Service, 2020 has been a good year so far. Cooksey admits it helps that he's in Florida and not New York or California, states that temporarily shut down businesses in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19.

"When the pandemic first kicked off, we thought it was going to be really bad, but that hasn't been the case," he says. "In our part of Florida, it was business as usual — or better than usual."

Paul Wikoff, owner, Total Care Pest Management, Emporia, Kan., says he gained new residential customers who suddenly became aware of the pests in their homes, where they are spending more time because of the pandemic. He expects the uptick in residential accounts to continue, as more customers welcome technicians wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) into their homes.

"I foresee our net profits and revenue increasing in 2021," Wikoff says. "Business will be a lot better next year, though our revenue



Paul Wikoff

Our 2021 State of the Industry survey shows PMPs have kept their foot on the gas

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

currently is up 44 percent year-over-year and we are enjoying every moment of it."

OPTIMISM ABOUNDS

Most PMPs who answered our survey believe the outlook for 2021 is "extremely optimistic."

At Admiral Pest Control in Bellflower, Calif., Treasurer Jeffrey Jones agrees. He says he is reasonably optimistic for 2021.

"Even dealing with COVID-19, business will be even better next year," he says.

Despite the pandemic, Jones said, Admiral's residential sales increased, as have commercial sales, albeit not at the same rate. He attributes the boost to a hot housing market and a rise in home improvements, as most of his customers have held onto their jobs.

"That has driven the termite control market to the high level we've seen recently, and I'm optimistic it will stay that way over the next 12 months," Jones

says. "Of course, no one can predict the future, especially in these turbulent times."

In Central Texas, Bob Howard, president of 855Bugs in Woodway, Texas, anticipates growth.

INSIDE

- \$6** Pandemic
- \$7** Top pest species
- \$10-11** Planned purchases
- \$12** Service offerings
- \$13** Revenue and profit projections
- \$14** Employee and customer issues
- \$15** Obstacles and opportunities



“What started out as a banner year was unexpectedly diminished by COVID-19,” he says. “Although we still will finish 2020 with a double-digit increase in revenue, 2021 should allow us to continue our expansion and rapid growth plans.”



Bob Howard

SLOW COMMERCIAL REBOUND

Many PMPs who service commercial accounts have experienced a slowdown. But business has picked up.

“Commercial pest control companies have experienced a slower recovery, especially those

that cater predominantly to hospitality and restaurant services,” says Joseph Edwards, president of J. Edwards Services in Alpharetta, Ga., who noted this trend while consulting with pest control business owners for his acquisition and growth strategy firm.

Edwards knows the challenges firsthand, as he also serves as president of North Fulton Pest Solutions. “Running our business during this pandemic has taught us we must be more creative while finding ways to be more productive, and still making every effort to maintain a safe

2021 OUTLOOK



environment for our employees and our customers,” he says.

Learn more about PMPs’ expectations for 2021 and how the coronavirus pandemic affected their businesses by checking out the following pages. Our exclusive 2021 State of the Industry supplement, sponsored by Bell Laboratories, includes benchmarking data, infographics and analyses that highlight key pest management industry trends and projections. PMP

You can reach SOFRANEC at dsofranec@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3793.

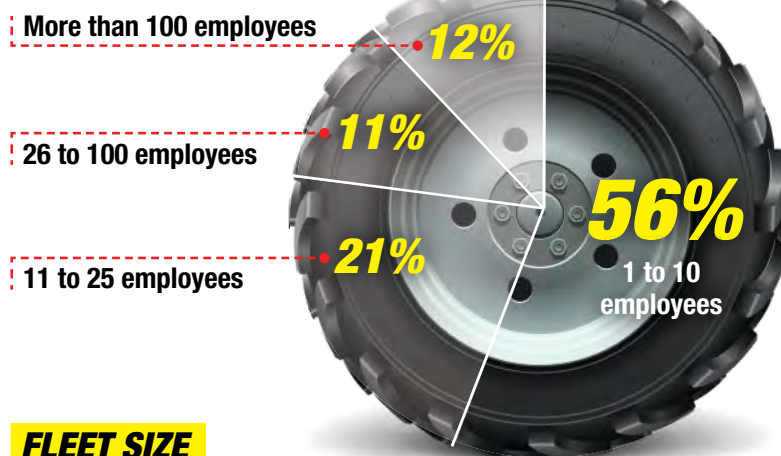
PMPs who tell it like it is

This summer, 220 pest management professionals (PMPs) — primarily company owners and presidents — completed our 33-question State of the Industry survey. Here is some background on their companies:

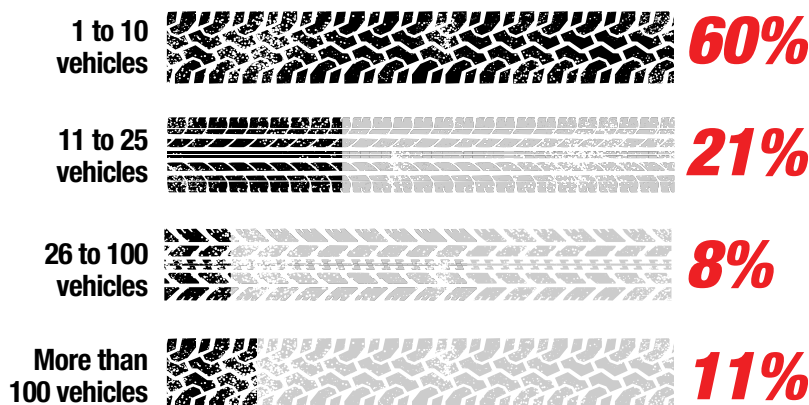
YEARS IN BUSINESS



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES



FLEET SIZE





CAUTION FLAG

PMPs steer clear of roadblocks created by the coronavirus pandemic **By Diane Sofranec** | PMP Senior Editor

In March, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security deemed pest control an essential service, a move that allowed pest management professionals (PMPs) to stay in business as states imposed mandatory stay-at-home orders to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

While the pandemic has changed the way PMPs do business — extra personal protective equipment (PPE), new safety protocols when providing service, etc. — it also has allowed them to continue to protect customers and their structures from pests.

BETTER BUSINESS

PMP's 2021 State of the Industry survey included a new question this year: *What is the biggest impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on your business?* PMPs were eager to share their experiences, as 171 of the 220 PMPs who responded answered our question.

Business has been better than expected, according to many, as customers sequestered at home noticed pests they didn't know they had. For others, however, revenue took a temporary hit, particularly for those with commercial accounts in markets with long-term, state-mandated shutdowns.

But PMPs are learning to adapt. Says one who experienced a sharp increase in residential calls, "The light commercial business we have skipped allowed us to sandbag routes with more profitable work, opening our eyes to the types of services we want to focus on now. It's time to cut some fat from the routes."

PMPs say some customers canceled or paused service at first, but have since resumed services. New customers have made up for those who have not yet returned, they add.

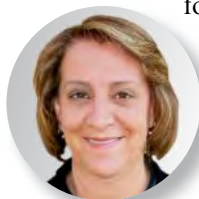
Indeed, most PMPs say they have been having a good year, despite the pandemic.

STAYING PROTECTED

PPE, which was a challenge for most to obtain during the early months of the pandemic, has helped alleviate customer concerns about safety.

"We struggled with finding suppliers for our PPE initially, but eventually found reliable sources and

kept our technicians supplied with the gloves, masks and shoe covers that our customers wanted us to wear," says Juli McLain, who handles sales and networking at Advanced Pest Control in Hot Springs, Ark. "We take every precaution to protect our customers and our employees. Wearing our masks and gloves at all times tends to set our customers' minds at ease."



Juli McLain

For customers who are still uneasy about allowing technicians inside, exterior-only services are an option, she adds.

NEW ADD-ON SERVICES

The pests that have been most prevalent throughout the pandemic are rodents scavenging for food after restaurant closures. PMPs report a decline in bed bug control business, most likely due to a dip in travel and some students studying at home instead of away at school dorms.

"We anticipate our canine rat detection and abatement, and canine mice detection services, to remain in high demand," says Scott Mullaney, director of animal services at Unique Pest Management in Woodbridge, Va. "However, our canine bed bug business will stay flat."

PMPs responding to our survey also tell us the pandemic had an impact on employee morale; the ability to hold company meetings and training; the cost of PPE hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes, which was high at first due to supply and demand; and interactions with customers concerned about their safety.

Scheduling appointments has become easier, though, because customers suddenly had more flexible schedules. As one respondent put it, "Customers have more motivation to resolve the pest issues they are dealing with in their homes because they are there all of the time." PMP

You can reach SOFRANEC at dsofranec@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3793.



Scott Mullaney

PMPs FIND THE GROOVE

The Top 5 revenue- and profit-producing pests hold steady, as PMPs continue to find innovative ways to gain control

By Heather Gooch | PMP Editor

In racing terms, the groove is the fastest, most efficient way around the racetrack. And in industry terms, it seems that many pest management professionals (PMPs) agree on which pests get them into the groove of success.

Just like last year, the Top 5 revenue-producing pests per our 2021 State of the Industry survey respondents include, in order, ants, rodents, cockroaches, termites and other wood-destroying organisms (WDO), and bed bugs. The order changes slightly when we talk about generating profits: ants, bed bugs, termite/WDO, rodents and cockroaches. (See p. S12.)

SPECIES VARIANCE

Compared to last year in the Top 5 rodents category, moles fell back two slots in favor of roof rats, which did not make the 2020 list. Moles tie with voles, which were No. 5 last year.

Ant and cockroach species held steady from last year, though results may vary at the individual pest management firm level.

Kim Brunell, president of president of LFH Inc., dba Brown Exterminating, reports that while Oriental cockroaches may rank No. 3 in our survey, they're No. 1 for her Ruckersville, Va.-based team.

"We have mild winters and a lot of basements in our area, so I would say Oriental is the top cockroach for us," she says.

In the survey's WDO category, carpenter bees and Eastern subterranean termites swapped spots this year over last year. Meanwhile, drywood and Formosan termites didn't even make the Top 5 last year. For 2021, they beat out true powderpost beetles (Bostrichidae) and wood-decay fungi, respectively.

TOP 3 REVENUE-GENERATING SPECIES

ANTS

1. CARPENTER (*CAMPONOTUS* spp.)
2. Pavement (*Tetramorium caespitum*)
3. Odorous house (*Tapinoma sessile*)
4. Argentine (*Linepithema humile*)
5. Fire (*Solenopsis* spp.)

RODENTS

1. HOUSE MICE (*MUS MUSCULUS*)
2. Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*)
3. Roof rats (*R. rattus*)
4. Deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)
5. Tie. Moles (*Talpidae*) and Meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)

COCKROACHES

1. GERMAN (*BLATTELLA GERMANICA*)
2. American (*Periplaneta americana*)
3. Oriental (*Blatta orientalis*)
4. Brown-banded (*Supella longipalpa*)
5. Smoky brown (*P. fuliginosa*)

SLF CONTINUES SPREAD

Tim McCafferty, general manager of Monaca, Pa.-based Leaf Pest Control, reports the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*, or SLF) is making its presence known in western Pennsylvania.

"Right now, the main form of control is manual seek-and-destroy, plus taking precautions like not parking under a shady tree or leaving your vehicle windows down," he says. "We also make sure techs' phones are geo-coded enabled, so if they come across SLF they can take photos and email them to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, which is tracking the SLF activity."

NEW RULES, NEW INNOVATION?

Bob Gordon, third-generation president of Gordon Termite Control in Bellflower, Calif., says he believes rodent control will look different next year in the Golden State, due to a newly enacted regulation that bans most uses of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. On the other hand, he doesn't see it as a bad thing.

"It's not the end of rodent control for us, and actually I think it will end up bringing us new products and technologies," Gordon says. "We need to show consumers we're more than the 'guys in the overalls carrying silver cans.' We're professionals, and we need to act, look and charge professionally as well." PMP

You can reach GOOCH at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.



Bob Gordon



PRODUCTS

POWERED BY



Bell
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES®



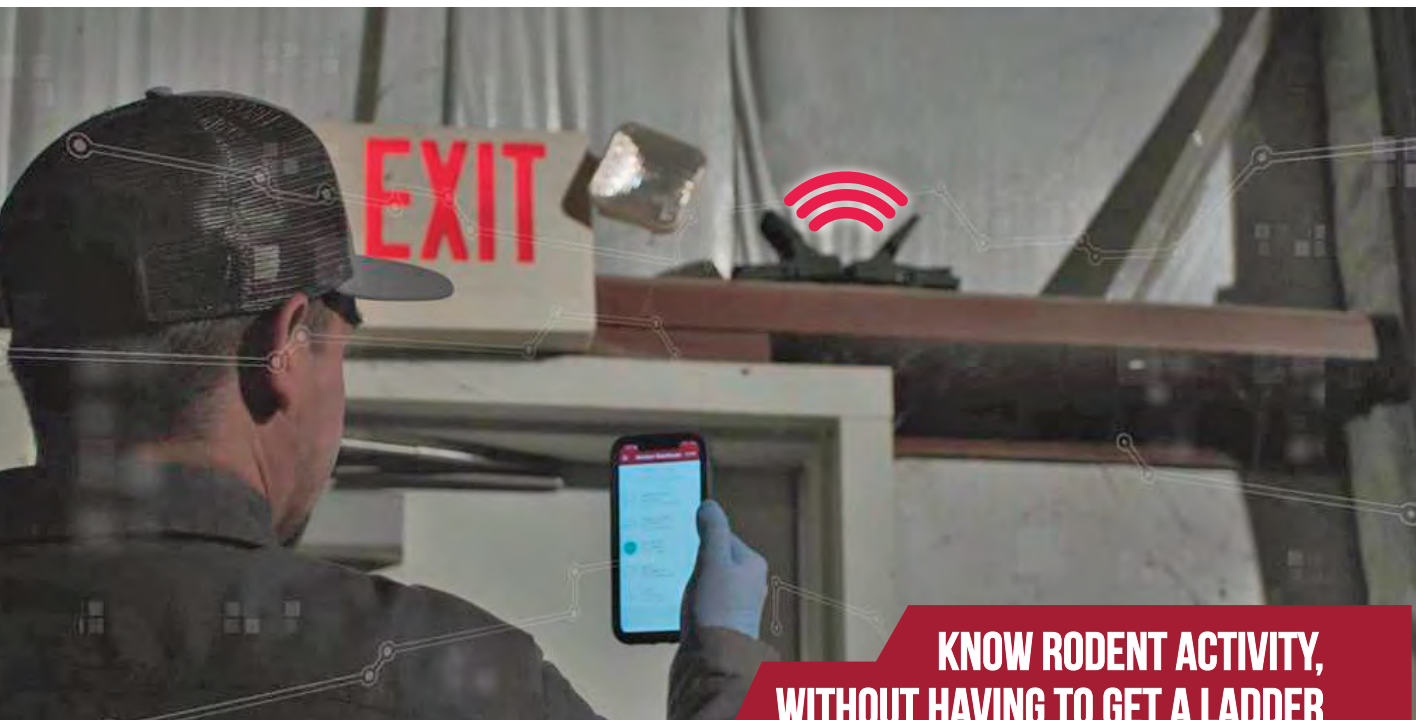
Protecta
EVO **EXPRESS** **iQ**

PMPs purchase products through distribution as usual, and then sign up for data subscription plans at www.BellSensing.com.

TRY FOR FREE

- subscribe and use for 90 days
before being charged!

- A subscription fee of \$15/month is charged per user of Bell Sensing Technologies iQ App.
- Can be used at unlimited accounts and with unlimited devices.
- No monthly charge for Portal access.



**KNOW RODENT ACTIVITY,
WITHOUT HAVING TO GET A LADDER**



TRAPPER® 24/7 iQ



TRAPPER® T-Rex iQ



Protecta EVO iQ

AVAILABLE SOON IN



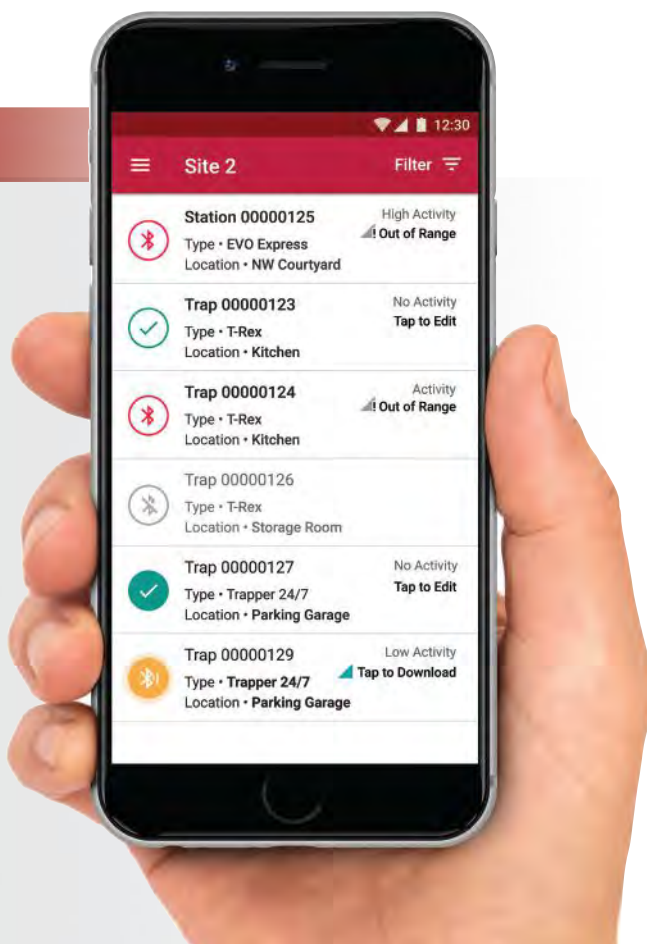
**WORKWAVE®
PestPac**

QUICK START GUIDE

LET'S BEGIN SENSING

- 1 Go to www.BellSensing.com
- 2 Click on Customer Log In button in top right hand corner
- 3 Create new user account
- 4 Follow set-up steps to create your own personalized Bell Sensing Technologies portal
- 5 Arrive at account and deploy iQ™ products

For complete training guides, videos and more, go to www.BellSensing.com
Contact us at: support@bellsensing.com



iQ PRODUCTS
POWERED BY

Bell
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES™

Bell
LABORATORIES, INC.

For information go to:
www.bellsensing.com



POLE-POSITION PURCHASING

PMPs plan their 2021 budgets with an eye toward practicality

By Heather Gooch | PMP Editor

Once again, the pest management professionals (PMPs) who have taken our exclusive State of the Industry survey have spoken: Baits remain at the top of the list of most popular purchases for pest management firms. This year, rather than categorizing various bait products into one, we broke it down further into cockroach bait (87 percent), ant bait (86 percent), bait stations (86 percent), rodent wax bait (70 percent), rodent soft bait (66 percent), bait guns/applicators (52 percent), and termite bait/installation tools (46 percent).

More than three quarters of PMPs (77 percent) reported their budgets for 2021 would be up. Half of PMPs expect their materials and equipment purchases to rise 6 percent or more in 2021. There also has to be an increase in patience for business owners, with the influence the global pandemic continues to have on material shortages and delivery times. While everyone interviewed for the State of the Industry agreed that obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE) is much easier than it was in the spring, the availability of some other materials — such as lumber — is

slowing to a trickle.

“We haven’t had a problem with PPE or insecticides, but we do some handyman services, and lumber is hard to get,” reports Philip Smith, president of Compass Pest Management, Cornelia, Ga. “And when it does come in, the cost is triple what it used to be.”

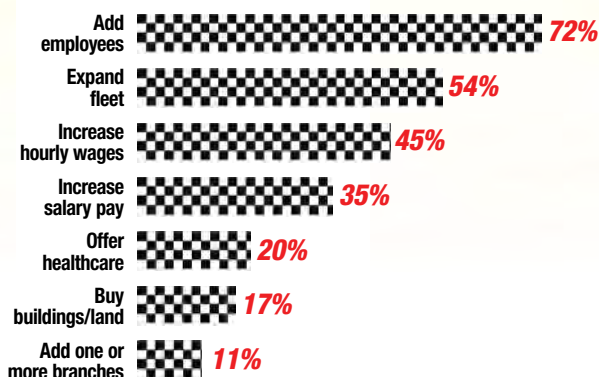
As a result, Smith says, his 25-technician firm has had to push back several repair jobs for termite and beetle damage.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Kim Brunell, president of president of LFH Inc., dba Brown Exterminating, Ruckersville, Va., wasn’t planning on moving offices this year. But when she learned her building lease became non-renewable after Oct. 31, she and the company’s six-person team had to plan accordingly.

The building her team is renting is much smaller than its former headquarters, so storage space is a big factor. “We cannot stock items like we used

OTHER INVESTMENTS

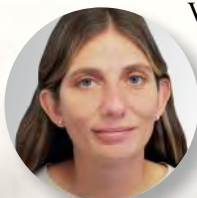


to,” Brunell says. Still, she is optimistic that by next year, they will have found their “forever place” — and this time, they will buy, not lease.

SHOP AROUND

Tim McCafferty, general manager of Monaca, Pa.-based Leaf Pest Control, is not shy about shopping for insurance programs every year, just to see what’s out there and to ensure his three-technician organization still is a good fit with the insurance agency he selects. Having an agency that specializes in pest control is a must, he says.

“We’ve been doing business with the same agencies, plural, for years, because they recognize that we use water-based materials, and that we only keep a small inventory in the office,” McCafferty explains, noting



Kim Brunell

that agencies less familiar with today's industry have a tendency to assume there's more liability to cover than what the reality is.

DON'T SKIMP ON EDUCATION

Compass Pest's Smith says a budget line for education is non-negotiable. Not only does it help keep callbacks low and initial training skills high, it also helps retain existing employees who feel more confident about their day-to-day responsibilities.

It doesn't have to be a huge expense, either, he says. Compass Pest uses the National Pest Management Association's basic training handbook for all employees. Its Georgia employees also use Georgia Pest Control Association materials to take the state test and keep up with continuing education units (CEUs). Its South Carolina

employees, meanwhile, attend South Carolina Pest Control Association meetings in the winter, and local association meetings as they're offered.

"We also do a lot of ongoing field training," Smith says. "It's not quite as structured as it would be at a larger national company, but techs work with their managers and supervisors in the field."

Every month, Compass Pest also conducts verifiable training in-house. "We focus on the hot topics of the season, like rodents in the fall, and termites and fire ants in the spring," Smith explains. He encourages all PMPs to make use of the educational opportunities offered by most industry manufacturer and distributor reps, as well as associations. PMP

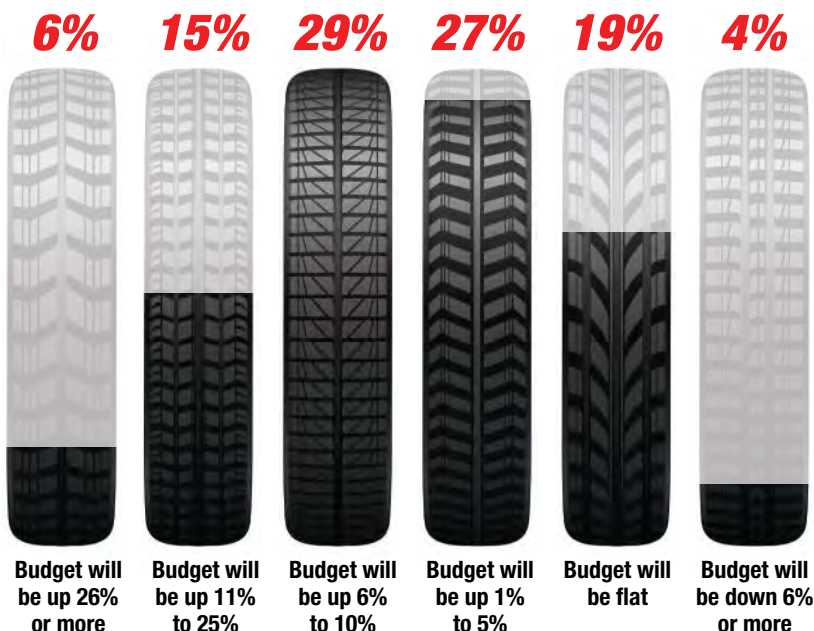
You can reach GOOCH at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.

2021 PLANNED PURCHASES

Cockroach bait	87%
Ant bait	86%
Bait stations	86%
Glue boards/trays	82%
Rodent traps	81%
Spray concentrate insecticides	80%
Insect growth regulators	79%
Granule insecticides	77%
Dust insecticides	72%
Wax block rodenticides	70%
Soft bait rodenticides	66%
Insect monitors	65%
Vehicles/accessories	65%
Insect traps (non-light)	63%
Backpack sprayers	62%
Pheromone traps/attractants	58%
Dusters	54%
Wettable powder insecticides	53%
Bait guns/applicators	52%
Insurance services	52%
Insect light traps	50%
Exclusion solutions	49%
Compressed air sprayers	48%
Termite bait/installation tools	46%
Borates	45%

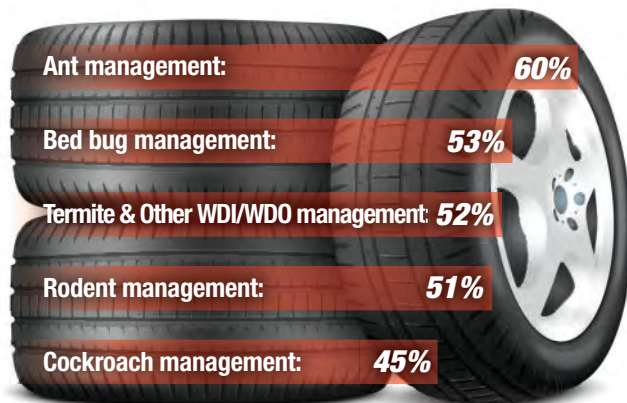
PROJECTED EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS BUDGET

2021 vs. 2020





TOP PROFIT-GENERATING SERVICES



LAP THE COMPETITION

Thinking outside the box with service offerings — properly priced — has helped PMPs stay ahead of the curve **By Heather Gooch** | PMP Editor

As an industry, we need to constantly think outside the box, with service diversification and with confident, customer service-oriented techs.”

Marillian Missiti, president of Belmont, Mass.-based Buono Pest Control Co., took the opportunity afforded by the COVID-19 quarantine to upgrade her team’s hiring and training

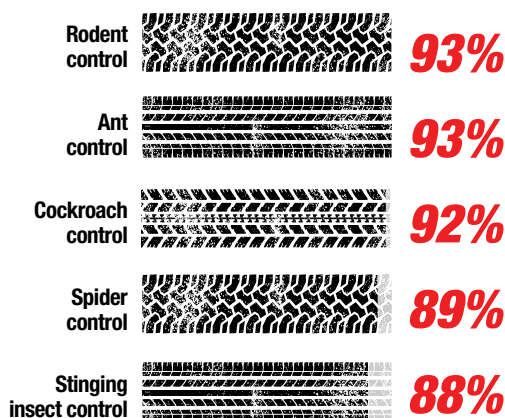
requirements across the board. For example, Buono Pest Control technicians have sharpened their skills for rodent exclusion and sealing holes.

This is in line with the 12 percent of survey respondents who reported handyman and other services have helped keep them afloat in 2020. Other services mentioned in our “other” category include holiday décor, crawlspace encapsulation, gutter covers, snow removal, tree maintenance and weed control.

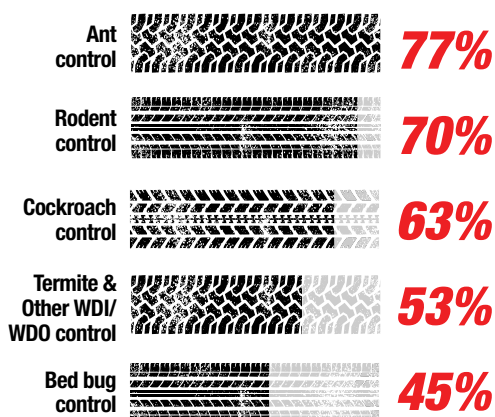


Marillian Missiti

CURRENT SERVICES



TOP REVENUE-GENERATING SERVICES



CHARGE WHAT YOU'RE WORTH

Bob Gordon, president of Gordon Termite Control, Bellflower, Calif., admits he gets frustrated by a tendency among some PMPs to not raise prices, even to offset cost-of-living increases.

“Sometimes, in a scramble for survival, small companies think the more money they put on the books, the better off they are. But that’s a short-term solution. Customer and employee retention are much more important than new sales,” he says.

When he and his team encounter a customer who questions them on price, Gordon has a ready response.

“Our employees have homes and families, and we have to pay them accordingly,” he explains. “We’ve been in business for 78 years. If we were ‘ripping people off,’ we’d be caught by now. We’re here for the long run, providing good service.” PMP

You can reach GOOCH at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.

GROWING LIKE A WEED

Desert Shield Pest Management President Tom Kosinski is rare among our reader respondents in that he reports “weed control” as one of his Top 5 services. But in his market of Bullhead City, Ariz., it’s not that big of a stretch.

Because the majority of Arizona properties feature xeriscaping, or low-irrigation landscaping featuring decorative plants and gravel, rather than traditional water-soaking grass lawns, Kosinski stays busy putting down pre-emergent weed control products at accounts spring through fall.

“Many homeowner associations require homes to have weed-free properties,” he points out. His work is his signature and his advertising: In many cases, he says, you can literally see “a line of demarcation” between the treated, weed-free property and the neighbor who has not had the service.

The service typically is one pre-emergent treatment, then spot spraying of a post-emergent as needed. “The clients have my phone number, should any weeds pop up,” Kosinski notes. — H.G.

OPEN THE THROTTLE

An unusual year has affected the economy, but our industry is resilient **By Heather Gooch** | PMP Editor

Philip Smith has been in pest control for nearly 30 years, the past 25 of which have been at the helm of Compass Pest Management, Cornelia, Ga. When he first got into the business, he recalls how the longtime executive director of the South Carolina Pest Control Association, Fred Cliff, took him aside and gave him some advice that resonates today.

"It was the mid-1990s, and I was about 27," Smith continues.

"He said, 'Let me tell you something, son, about pest control. It's a recession-proof industry.' Well, I thought he was crazy."

By 2007 and the plunge into the Great Recession, however, Smith realized how right Cliff was.

"We quit growing at the same rate, but we weren't as hurt as I expected us to be," Smith explains. "We had a number of customers tell us back then, 'My house is my biggest investment, and I'm going to take care of it.' We expected people to drop pest control, but they didn't."

With the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Smith adds, it's been a lot like that recession era: Growth may have slowed, but not stopped.

'THE WORK IS THERE'

For some pest management professionals, there's been growth. Smith reports business is up more than 12 percent. Our 2021 State of the Industry survey notes that

overall, business owners are optimistic about profitability in 2021 — 79 percent of respondents report profits will rise next year.

Buono Pest Control Co. President Marillian Missiti says her Belmont, Mass.-based company experienced 18 percent growth this year. She attributes it primarily to Buono Pest's focus on hospitals and other sensitive accounts with add-on services.

"The beginning was a challenge," she admits, "but the work is there, and by the middle of the year things evened out."

ELECTION YEAR COMEBACK

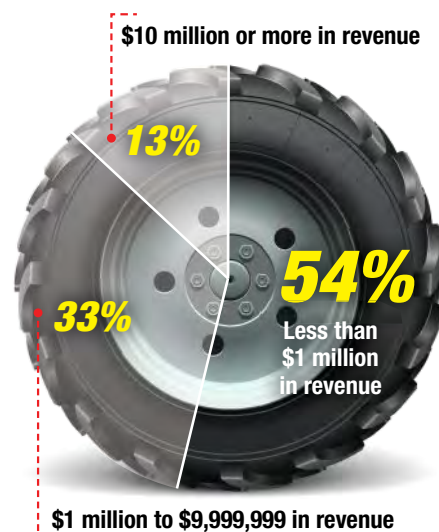
Gordon Termite Control's Bob Gordon says he thinks election years provide an economic edge.

"After a Presidential election, historically speaking, the economy has often rebounded," says Gordon, president of the Bellflower, Calif.-based firm. "There's almost always a rebirth, a very good business year."

But to ensure customer relationships remain strong, Gordon's team is in regular communication with them via email, text and direct mail. The pandemic has brought an added dimension of reassuring customers that the company is doing everything in its power to keep everyone safe.

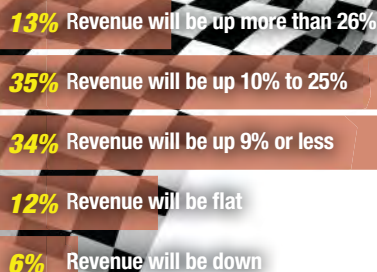
"We remind them of our safety protocols and how we are

PROJECTED 2021 REVENUE



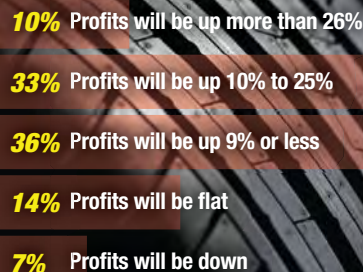
PROJECTED REVENUE CHANGE

2021 vs. 2020



PROJECTED NET PROFITS CHANGE

2021 vs. 2020



complying with regulations," Gordon says. "We're hearing back that long-term customers enjoy our attitude of doing business with safety first, and new customers appreciate the information." PMP

You can reach GOOCH at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.



CHAMPION TEAM

PMPs ensure employees, customers go the distance despite this year's unique retention challenges

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

Pest management professionals (PMPs) have had little control over the ways in which their employees and customers reacted to the coronavirus pandemic.

Some customers stepped up their pest control services because they were at home and seeing pests they didn't know they had. Others paused or canceled services because their businesses closed permanently or temporarily; they lost their jobs; or they feared contracting COVID-19.

Many pest control companies complying with state-mandated temporary shutdowns required employees to work from home — and those not suited to the change quit. Some firms with customers hard-hit by the pandemic furloughed or laid off workers due to lack of work. Other employees left good jobs because they believed they could make more money collecting unemployment due to generous unemployment compensation. In some cases, employees refused to work for fear of contracting COVID-19.

"Employees are using COVID-19 as a way to take time off," complained one PMP who responded to our

2021 State of the Industry survey.

A SILVER LINING

Overall, though, PMPs remain optimistic regarding employee retention. David Cooksey, CFO of McCall Service in Jacksonville, Fla., says office staff now work from home, and the company's phone and computer systems keep track of their work. The move has been good for morale, he adds, and helpful to employees with young children to care for as some schools and daycares shut down.

"They have been more productive working from home. It opened our eyes," he explains. "We don't plan on bringing them back."

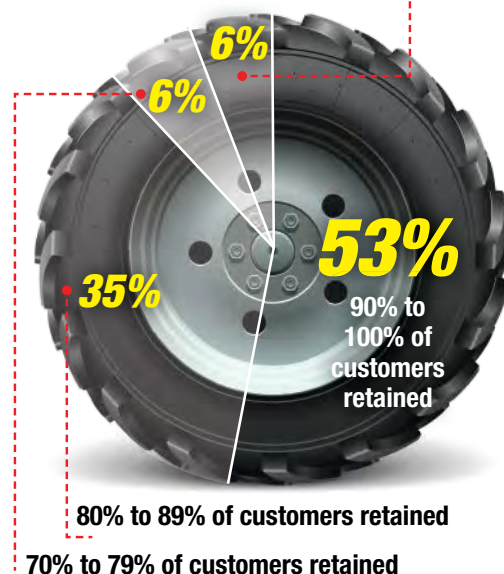
The work-from-home trend may continue into 2021, as COVID-19 concerns continue. If that helps retain employees, and reduces costs for office space, supplies and equipment, the change may be permanent.

"The savings companies are getting from this work structure and the proven productivity results will prompt them to continue it," predicts Paul Wikoff, owner of Total Care Pest Management in Emporia, Kan. PMP

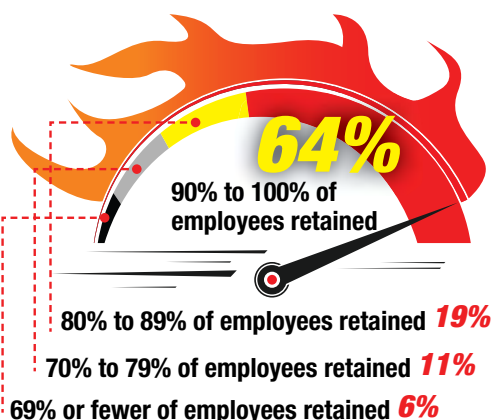
You can reach SOFRANEC at dsfranec@northcoastmedia.net or 216-706-3793.

PROJECTED 2021 CUSTOMER RETENTION

69% or fewer of customers retained



PROJECTED 2021 EMPLOYEE RETENTION



PROJECTED 2021 COMPENSATION FOR HOURLY POSITIONS IN RESIDENTIAL PEST CONTROL



WINNERS DRINK MILK

If you keep your eyes on the road, you can conquer nearly any obstacle in your path

By Heather Gooch | PMP Editor

In 1936, Indianapolis 500 race winner Louis Meyer celebrated his victory with a bottle of milk. Actually, it was homemade buttermilk from his mother, but the next year the American Dairy Association Indiana got involved and ever since has ensured that — according to WinnersDrinkMilk.com — there is a “ceremonial hand-off with an Indiana dairy farmer giving the iconic, glass bottle of milk to the winner with over 250,000 people watching in-person and more worldwide.”

The winner gets that bottle after beating the odds, seizing opportunities and overcoming obstacles. What’s the bottle for a pest management professional (PMP)? It may be retirement, or the day he or she tosses the keys to the next generation, or it may be some other, more immediate goal. Regardless, seizing opportunities and overcoming obstacles is a daily task.

MAKE TIME TO NETWORK

Despite the pandemic, community involvement offers PMPs a huge opportunity to build their reputations.

Involvement in the Rotary Club and local Chamber of Commerce has been “huge” in terms of referrals, reports Philip Smith, president of Compass Pest Management, Cornelia, Ga. He’s even been able to convince some do-it-yourselfers (DIYers) in the group to trust a PMP for the job.

Tim McCafferty, general manager of Leaf Pest Control, Monaca, Pa., agrees that educating DIYers can pay off.

It’s one thing “if there’s one anthill in the yard,” McCafferty says. But if there are several, he takes the conversation to the next level when he can. “I ask them, ‘What is your time worth?’”

“Time is a resource that never can be replicated,” he continues. “Most people work all week; they don’t feel like going out and trying to do *my* job. What if it’s pouring rain all weekend? What about their child’s soccer practice? We often are able to convince them that if they don’t need us monthly, to at least try us every other month.”



Tim McCafferty

HAPPY TECHS, HAPPY CUSTOMERS

Kim Brunell says her 2021 goals for LFH Inc., dba Brown Exterminating, include stepping up training opportunities for her technicians, so they’re better educated and thus customers are, too.

“Being knowledgeable and up-to-date will win a sale, regardless of the price,” says Brunell, second-generation president of the

Ruckersville, Va.-based firm. “Still, people are always shopping around to find the best price. I think having solid relationships and really getting to know your customers go a long way in this business. Pest control is something that always will be around, and forging and nurturing relationships is the key to holding long-term customers.” PMP

You can reach GOOCH at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.

TAKING CARE OF THE CREW

Marillian Missiti, president of Buono Pest Control Co., Belmont, Mass., continues a tradition for her 15 employees that was implemented by her dad, Ben Buono, when he was president many years ago: A company profit-sharing plan.

“Dad started this via a pension program,” she explains. “But it gives our people a big incentive to retire with us, which is our goal. I’m really proud of how well it’s worked.”

Even employees who move on, she says, like a long-time technician who left to pursue his dream of becoming a full-time firefighter, are able to roll the pension program into their new workplace pensions.

Missiti advises having a third-party benefits planner manage the program: “Hiring a pro ensures all of the paperwork and tax issues that go along with the program run smoothly and efficiently, year after year.” — H.G.

PROJECTED TOP 2021 OBSTACLES

1. GENERAL ECONOMY
2. Restrictions related to coronavirus pandemic
3. Lowballing competitors
4. Hiring and training
5. Do-it-yourself competition

PROJECTED TOP 2021 OPPORTUNITIES

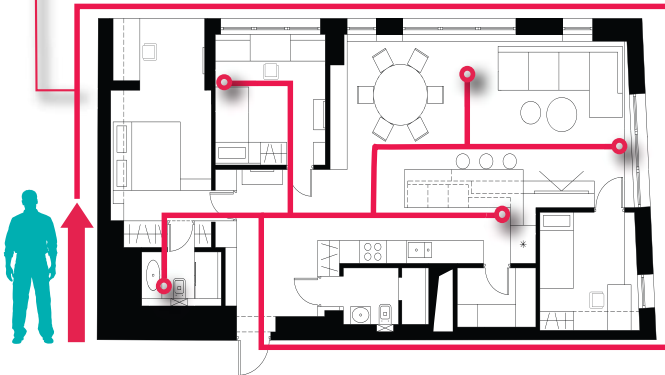
1. INCREASE REFERRALS
2. Increase repeat business
3. Upsell services
4. Improve customer retention
5. Increase prices

iQ PRODUCTS: SOCIALLY DISTANCED RODENT CONTROL

AVAILABLE SOON IN



BEFORE



AFTER



Bell is committed to providing the tools that Pest Management Professionals (PMP's) need to get the job done. PMP's are among the essential workers that have to adapt their operating procedures. Bell Sensing Technologies iQ products permit PMPs to streamline service and maintain a safe distance from their customer.



CAPTURE INDOOR RODENT ACTIVITY, WITHOUT GOING INSIDE



MAINTAIN SAFE SOCIAL DISTANCE AT YOUR ACCOUNTS

iQ PRODUCTS
POWERED BY **Bell**
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES™



Account Location	Service Detail
Windsor 8166 Woodland Court Windsor, ON N9E 5E5 United States	Technician: John Smith Service Date: 5/6/2020 Time In: 5/6/2020 9:55 AM Time Out: 5/6/2020 10:07 AM
General Comments/Instructions	

SHORTEN DURATION OF SERVICE VISIT



OPTIMIZE YOUR SERVICE BY STAYING AHEAD OF CHANGES IN RODENT BEHAVIOR

DELIVER CONTACTLESS RODENT CONTROL

IT IS CRITICAL TO ACT NOW

Technicians can provide effective rodent control, efficiently and affordably, at a safe distance. iQ products will help you properly service accounts, while protecting the public health.

iQ PRODUCTS
POWERED BY

Bell
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES™

Bell
LABORATORIES, INC.

For information go to:
www.bellsensing.com