

THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING TECHNICAL JOURNAL SINCE 1933

PMP PestManagement PROFESSIONAL

The 2017 *PMP* Growth Summit brain trust met at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla., Jan. 31-Feb. 2.



ALIGNING THE STARS

Inaugural *PMP* Growth Summit brings together owners and suppliers for next-level networking.

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Summit platform is a new wrinkle in networking

BY **HEATHER GOOCH** | Editor

Imagine spending three days and two nights at a gorgeous Florida resort, away from theme parks and other distractions. You're surrounded by your peers in various social and educational settings. You're also meeting one-on-one with several leading industry suppliers with whom you've only been able to chat briefly on a crowded trade show floor — if you've ever even met them directly at all. Additionally, you're interacting with *Pest Management Professional (PMP)* staffers, who are interested in your thoughts and insights about all facets of the industry, as they continue to shape their coverage.

All of this was a reality for inaugural *PMP* Growth Summit attendees, who gathered from throughout the country to participate in our event Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2017. We were inspired to host the Summit based on the successes of our sister publications in the landscape, golf and propane service industries. We followed a similar format, but were able to tweak the Summit to showcase two of our columnists — *PMP* Hall of Famer Dr. Austin Frishman and “Start-up Diarist” Pete Schopen — who shared their experiences and lessons learned. They were on hand the entire event to answer questions one-on-one.

Feedback from sponsor and *PMP* attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. We look forward to hosting our *PMP* Growth Summit annually, making minor tweaks and enhancements as we grow. If your company generates \$1 million or more in annual pest management revenue, and you'd like more information about joining us next year, drop me a line at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net. **PMP**

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



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2 T.W. Alexander Dr.
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
800.331.2867



Science For A Better Life

Company representatives:

Shawn Mullen, PPM Eastern U.S. Sales Manager, 973.992.1998, shawn.mullen@bayer.com
Walt Weinwurm, Key Account Manager, 770.289.1929, walt.weinwurm@bayer.com
Matt Remmen, Area Sales Manager, South Florida and Puerto Rico, matthew.remmen@bayer.com, 954.319.4437

20925 Chico St.
Carson, CA 90746
800.503.5444



Company representative:

Cameron Riddell, President and Co-founder, 800.503.5444, cameron.riddell@birdbarrier.com

5903 Genoa-Red Bluff Rd.
Pasadena, TX 77507
800.242.5562



Control Solutions Inc.
A member of the ADAMA Group

Company representatives:

Mark Boyd, President, 281.892.2502, mark@controlsolutionsinc.com
Curtis Clark, Executive VP, 281.892.2509, cclark@controlsolutionsinc.com
Tony Gugliuzza, PCO National Sales Manager, 504.247.5141, tony@controlsolutionsinc.com

2053 Highway 5 S
Albia, IA 52531
800.247.5062



Company representative:

Nick Fugate, International and Midwest Sales Manager, 641.932.7846, nick@kness.com

8810 Tenth Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55427
800.645.6466



Company representatives:

Steve Gullickson, CEO, steve.gullickson@mgk.com
Kevin Caskey, VP, Sales and Marketing, 763.593.3471, kevin.caskey@mgk.com
Mike Burkett, Director of Sales – Branded Products, 763.593.1353, mike.burkett@mgk.com
Ian Thorburn, Director of Marketing, 763.593.3479, ian.thorburn@mgk.com

215 Evergreen Ct.
Saylorsburg, PA 18353
610.849.1723



Company representative:

Andrej Branc, Sales Account Manager, 610.849.1723, andrej@pelgar-usa.com

4375 Pineview Dr.
Walled Lake, MI 48390
888.422.7478



Company representatives:

Joe Kucik, CEO and Founder, 888.422.7478, jkucik@realgreen.com
Beth Berry, VP, Business Solutions & Software, 317.861.8888, bberry@realgreen.com
Brian Wareck, Account Representative, 800.422.7478, bwareck@realgreen.com

1257 Bedford Ave.
North Kansas City, MO 64116
816.283.3167



Company representatives:

James Osuch, VP of Sales, 816.283.3167, josuch@rockwelllabs.com
Jim Shuford, Technical Representative, 941.350.6223, biologics@aol.com

2017 Growth Summit: PMP Attendees



LONNIE ALONSO
President
Columbus Pest Control
Columbus, Ohio



JOSH ALPERT
President
Green Earth Pest Control
New York, N.Y.



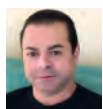
PAM BLAUVELT
Vice President of Operations
Griffin Pest Solutions
Kalamazoo, Mich.



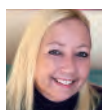
RYAN BRADBURY
President
Viking Pest Control
Warren, N.J.



MICHAEL BRODER
President
BHB Pest Elimination
New York, N.Y.



ANDY CARACE
Vice President
Pest-End Exterminators
Plaistow, N.H.



NANCY CARACE
President
Pest-End Exterminators
Plaistow, N.H.



GENE CHAFE
General Manager
Senske Pest Control
Kennewick, Wash.



GREG CLENDENIN
CEO
Heron Home & Outdoor
Orlando, Fla.



DAVID COOKSEY
CFO
McCall Service
Jacksonville, Fla.



CHRIS CRAMER
Owner
Cramer Pest Control
Fort Mill, S.C.



WILLIAM IDDINGS
Co-owner
Advantage Green
Lawn & Pest Solutions
Summerfield, Fla.



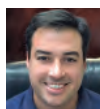
BOBBY JENKINS
President
ABC Home & Commercial Services
Austin, Texas



DENNIS JENKINS
President
ABC Home & Commercial
Services DFW
Lewisville, Texas



RALEIGH JENKINS
President
ABC Home & Commercial Services
Houston, Texas



JOE MARTIN
Entomologist
Terminix of New Orleans
Metairie, La.



VINCENT PALUMBO
President
Terminix of New Orleans
Metairie, La.



COURT PARKER
COO
Bug Busters USA
Woodstock, Ga.



JASON PAYNE
President
Payne Pest Management
San Diego, Calif.



CARMEN REINO
President
Anchor Pest Control
Woodbridge, N.J.



MIKE ROTTLER
President
Rottler Pest & Lawn Solutions
St. Louis, Mo.



PETE SCHOPEN
Co-owner
Schopen Pest Solutions
Lakemoor, Ill.



TAMI SCHOPEN
Co-owner
Schopen Pest Solutions
Lakemoor, Ill.



JOSEPH SHEEHAN
President
Colony Pest Management
Brooklyn, N.Y.



BETH SPENCER
Manager of Purchasing
Environmental Pest Service
Sarasota, Fla.



MIKE TULLOS
Operations Director
Cramer Pest Control
Fort Mill, S.C.



ALFIE TRELEVEN
President
Sprague Pest Solutions
Tacoma, Wash.



ANNE-MARIE TULP
President
Adam's Pest Control
Port St. Lucie, Fla.



MICHAEL TULP
Vice President
Adam's Pest Control
Port St. Lucie, Fla.



JAMES WHITE
Co-owner
Advantage Green
Lawn & Pest Solutions
Summerfield, Fla.

Everything old is **new** again

The venerable 'Doc' Frishman spoke, and Summit attendees listened.

BY **HEATHER GOOCH** | Editor

Longtime *Pest Management Professional* (PMP) columnist Dr. Austin M. Frishman, BCE-Emeritus, *PMP* Hall of Fame Class of 2002, is known for inspiring and mentoring generations of pest management professionals (PMPs). Whether they are former students of his from Farmindale State College, Purdue or Cornell; attendees who rub elbows with him at an industry conference; or technicians at accounts he is called in to troubleshoot, Dr. Frishman shares his wisdom on pests and their control as naturally as the sun warms Orlando, Fla. — which happens to be the city in which he delivered the first-ever *PMP* Growth Summit keynote presentation on Jan. 31, 2017.

Presentations by “Doc” aren’t so much linear as they are pure storytelling, with humor and practical tips shared in equal measure. The 76-year-old opened with a tale of growing up in poverty on a chicken farm during World War II: “One day, my uncle brought home this amazing thing and put it in the window. We didn’t have any more flies. It was called a screen.”



Dr. Austin Frishman sprinkled in tales from his career in his industry overview.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

Doc gave a compact overview of the industry’s history, from its predominantly Jewish roots (German Jews had to kill so many rats for the bergmeister, or else they had to pay a big fine and go to jail; thus, they soon became experts at the task), culminating in the Civil War era’s Solomon Rose following Sherman’s March and clearing out any post-battle rats and fleas to prevent plague.

Doc then skipped ahead to fellow *PMP* Hall of Famer J.J. Davis, a Purdue University entomology professor who set tongues wagging among academics because he reached out to exterminators to share knowledge and technique. “Extension people hated exterminators back then, because they thought we were taking business from them and were crooks,” Doc said. “At the time, I was getting a master’s degree in livestock entomology at Cornell, but I wanted to go to Purdue. I was told that pest controllers only want to leave the pests so they can come back.”

Doc wisely ignored the detractors and ended up being mentored by Prof. Davis for more than a year. “Yet in many ways, the industry is ahead of the teachers,” he pointed out. “They know when new pests come in, new techniques and so forth.”

World War II brought a new wave of pest controllers and new techniques. The ’50s gave way to the ’60s — and the rise of Rachel Carson and her infamous book, *Silent Spring*. But Doc reported that fellow *PMP* Hall of Famer Dr. John Osmun maintained “she did an important thing for our industry” in making us sit up and take notice of regulations and more targeted applications.

THE PEACE-OF-MIND BUSINESS

For the past 50 years or so, Doc said, PMPs have been providing peace of mind: “Anyone who tells you pest management isn’t important doesn’t understand what it’s about.”

Doc also looked ahead, commenting on computer monitors that can tell which floor of an apartment building your technician is inspecting in real time and the use of drones to spray a bald-faced hornet nest high in a tree. Yet he warned that while mobile technology is nice and efficient, “don’t forget to get your hands dirty. Remember the child bitten by rats.” PMP

You can reach **GOOCH** at hgooch@northcoastmedianet or 330-321-9754.

PHOTO: MARTY WHITFORD



Schopen shares lessons learned

The president of Schopen Pest Solutions reflects upon what makes a company successful.

BY **HEATHER GOOCH** | Editor

Pete Schopen, the “Start-up Diaries” columnist for *Pest Management Professional (PMP)*, started his keynote presentation to *PMP* Growth Summit attendees with a confession: “I wanted to be Bob Costas, not Bobby Corrigan.”

The juxtaposition of the famed sportscaster and the famed rodent expert is not lost on Schopen, who resisted following in his dad’s footsteps as a pest management professional (PMP) as long as he could. After a successful stint in sports broadcasting, the loss of his father-in-law from a heart attack just hours after the birth of his and his wife Tami’s first child, Trey, made Schopen re-evaluate what’s most important in life.

“I only know how to broadcast a college football game and kill a cockroach,” he quipped to attendees, noting that the latter skill would let him spend more time with his family.

GIVE 110 PERCENT

In part thanks to authoring *PMP*’s “Start-up Diaries” column, Schopen receives inquiries daily from others new to the business, asking for advice. “My No. 1 suggestion for getting new customers is to picture your competition getting them, and to do whatever it takes to not let that happen.”

Unlike, say, getting an estimate on a kitchen remodel, a potential customer calls because they’re upset, he explained. “In fact, distraught customers are the best because they’ll listen, understand, and — once you take care of their problem and show that you care about them — they are often customers for life.”

To spark a similar sense of urgency among his employees, Schopen said he’s a fan of setting goals. “For example, I told them if we could double our December sales from 2015 to 2016, I’d take them to a swanky dinner in Chicago. In December, we ended up tripling sales. They looked at it as a game.”

Schopen said it’s important to ask every customer,

“Did I meet all your needs today?” If they say yes, he has instructed his technicians to reply with “If you don’t mind going to Home Advisor and giving us a five-star review ...” It’s what has helped the company stay No. 1 in HomeAdvisor.com’s Chicagoland market, he said.

CELEBRATE THE VICTORIES

When Schopen decided to expand his one-man operation, he knew he “wanted to be the cool boss, with the Foosball tables and projection TV.” But he didn’t have a lot of money to spare. Instead, he made sure morale was built upon the little things, such as:

- Monthly breakfast training sessions.
- New (or nearly new) trucks for every new technician.
- Cell phones, including for secretaries and programmers.
- New uniforms every six months.
- Top-of-the-line flashlights and flashlight holders.
- New hand sprayers and power sprayers.
- End-of-year bonuses comprising one to two paychecks.

For all these perks, Schopen expects knowledgeable, dedicated employees in return. “Look, my strength is in sales,” he said. “I’m not so good with paperwork or technology. I’m the guy who almost blew three of his fingers off trying to fix a car battery. I hire smart because I do stupid things.”

Building his business this way has led to Schopen being able to build an 8,000-sq.-ft. facility they’re moving into later this year, complete with a locker room and industry media library.

He wrapped up his presentation with lessons he learned from his mentor and father, Pete Sr.:

- Listen to and trust your employees.
- Enjoy what you’re doing.
- Have a passion for your career.
- Be honest.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Be positive. *PMP*

You can reach **GOOCH** at hgooch@northcoastmedianet or 330-321-9754.

4 Growth Summit revelations

Sharing ideas in an ideal setting generated industry insights.

BY **DIANE SOFRANEC** | Managing Editor

Pest Management Professional hosted eight industry-leading suppliers, and 30 pest management professionals (PMPs) representing 24 companies at its inaugural *PMP* Growth Summit. PMPs who attended the event shared their opinions on pest- and business-related challenges and solutions. Here are four takeaways from our discussions with PMP attendees.

1 SEEK SOLUTIONS ABOUT HOW TO BEST WORK WITH MILLENNIALS. Working with millennials appears to be a mystery to many in the pest management industry. But most of the PMPs who attended the 2017 *PMP* Growth Summit devised ways to effectively manage their employees who were born between 1981 and 2000.

“Millennials really want to understand what they’re doing and why it matters,” said Mike Rottler, president of St. Louis-based Rottler Pest & Lawn Solutions. “Once you show that to them, I find that they’re easy to work with.”

Suppliers and PMPs mingled during the opening reception.



Chris Cramer, owner of Cramer Pest Control, Fort Mill, S.C., also suggested employers be specific.

“Align a plan for them that details your expectations,” he said. “Once they have a proper plan laid out for them, they often can exceed any expectations that are laid out. When people don’t give millennials clear instructions, it can become frustrating for both sides.”

Being more open to the millennial lifestyle also helps, according to Michael Tulp, vice president, Adam’s Pest Control, Port St. Lucie, Fla.

“Many millennials want to have a more flexible work week,” Tulp said. “They want more time for themselves and their families. We have to be more aware, and maybe change some company policies. We don’t want to upset our older employees, but we have to be aware millennials are changing the workforce.”

To attract up-and-coming workers, Dennis Jenkins, president, ABC Pest & Lawn of DFW, Lewisville, Texas, suggested promoting the ways in which the company helps the community, because volunteering was a school requirement for many millennials.

“If we’re not giving millennials an opportunity to volunteer and make a difference in their communities, then we’re going to miss the boat with some of these folks,” he said.

2 FINDING AND KEEPING GOOD EMPLOYEES REMAINS A CHALLENGE. Bobby Jenkins, president, ABC Home & Commercial Services, Austin, Texas, said one of the industry’s biggest challenges is employee retention.





From left, Andrej Branc, PelGar USA; PMP's own Ryan Gerard; James White, Advantage Green Lawn & Pest Solutions; and Lonnie Alonso, Columbus Pest Control, show off the pro shop certificates they received for winning the golf tournament. Below: "Goody bags" were given to each Summit attendee.



"We've got to do a better job of attracting people and keeping them," he said. "This is a career growth industry. If I come into this industry, I can grow with the company, or I can grow with the industry."

David Cooksey, CFO, McCall Services, Jacksonville, Fla., agreed.

He said the number of employees who have worked at his company more than 10 years is increasing.

"We're looking for the entrepreneur, somebody who can go out and build his or her own route, because as he or she becomes more successful, we become more successful," Cooksey said. "We see people staying a long time because they can control their own destinies, and we sell that."

Pamela Blauvelt, vice president and co-owner, Griffin Pest Solutions, Kalamazoo, Mich., said it's important for prospective hires to understand that PMPs protect health and property.

"This is a good, stable industry and we provide a good service," she said. "But getting that message out is our biggest obstacle."

Sometimes, the obstacle is "the ick factor." Court Parker, COO,

Bug Busters USA, Woodstock, Ga., said many people who don't like bugs won't consider taking a job with a pest management company.

"Some people think our industry is all about bugs, but this is a people business," Parker said. "If we can change that [perception], we will attract more talent."

Carmen Reino, president, Anchor Pest Control Woodbridge, N.J., concurred. When he advertises for sales positions, he doesn't mention "pest control" until he screens applicants by phone.

"If you put a sales job [ad] out there, and you don't say 'pest control,' you get a better response," Reino said. "'Pest control sales' seems to scare a lot of people away."

Parker said it can be challenging to find people his company can develop. "We're not asking for people who are already in the industry or have worked in the industry," he said. "We want to find new talent we can train, because our industry is great at that."

While Tulp advised making sure prospective employees fit in with the company's culture, he added, "Then you've got to train, and you've got to train, and you've got to train."

Pest management companies on the West Coast face additional challenges, as the legalization of marijuana state by state makes it tough to keep good employees.

"Finding qualified employees who can pass a criminal background check, drug screen, and a DMV check is becoming increasingly difficult," said Gene Chafe, GM,

QUOTABLE

"At the end of the day, there are always going to be bugs, and there are always going to be people who don't want to live with bugs."

— BOBBY JENKINS,
PRESIDENT, ABC HOME &
COMMERCIAL SERVICES

"There's not a better industry to be in, to be able to raise your family. Even at the technician level, that route is basically your own business."

— DAVID COOKSEY, CFO,
MCCALL SERVICES

"We need to protect food, property and people's lives. The fact that we have regulation shows there is an importance to what we do."

— MIKE ROTTLE, PRESIDENT,
ROTTLE PEST & LAWN
SOLUTIONS

"The directions on labels are there for a reason. A lot of smart people put our products and labels together. We should follow those rules."

— JOE MARTIN,
ENTOMOLOGIST AND
PRESIDENT, TERMINIX
OF NEW ORLEANS

"Regulations for this industry can sometimes be difficult to work within; however, they also can serve to make the industry tighter, and more organized and standardized. Many regulations not only protect the public, they protect our industry."

— PAMELA BLAUVELT,
VICE PRESIDENT AND
CO-OWNER, GRIFFIN
PEST SOLUTIONS

Senske Services, Kennewick, Wash. “We’re attempting, through better wages, to attract employees, and that seems to be relatively successful in some of our markets.”

3 YOU CAN CONVERT DO-IT-YOURSELFERS.

The professional pest management industry was partially built by one-time do-it-yourselfers (DIYers). The problem is, some DIYers are especially inept and give pest control, in general, a bad reputation.

“Some people think the pesticides we put down are harmful,” said James White, co-owner, Advantage Green Lawn & Pest Solutions, Summerfield, Fla. “They get this from [news reports about] people who are not in the business who make these mistakes and don’t read the labels — and then it’s like a big shadow over pest control.”

Advantage Green Lawn & Pest Solutions Co-owner William Iddings agreed.

“The first thing people think about is the product,” Iddings said. “They don’t think about the person who made this horrific error in judgment.”

So how can PMPs show potential DIYers the value of using professional services? Chafe suggested marketing to millennials.

The PMP team had Summit help from several members of parent company North Coast Media.

“Most millennials don’t care to be do-it-yourselfers. Most will hire somebody before they’ll attempt to do it themselves,”



Above, the closing night barbecue dinner. At left, Jason Payne, Payne Pest Management, is interviewed by PMP Digital Editor Joelle Harms.

Chafe said. “We’re actively involved in marketing to that group, and they seem to be willing buyers.”

As more millennials become homeowners, many will hire professionals to handle the services they need, said Alfie Treleven, president, Sprague Pest Solutions, Tacoma, Wash.

“We have a new generation coming through that is more focused on outsourcing than the baby boomers ever were,” Treleven said.

Cramer agreed. “Excel in what you do so when they do contact you, they recognize they’ve gotten into an arena [DIY pest control] they probably never should have entered,” he added. “Make sure you take care of their issues as soon as you get the opportunity; they will convert eventually.”

4 WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE FOR MANY PMPs.

Several PMPs mentioned nuisance wildlife management as a growing service segment.

“With the amount of construction going on throughout the different canyons, we’re starting to see a lot more coyotes and wildlife coming into the residential areas,” said Jason Payne, president, Payne Pest Management, San Diego, Calif. “So that’s a very good opportunity for growth.”

Another key to growth is positioning PMPs as experts who can help their customers live better lives.

“We’re not only protecting people’s food and property, we’re also protecting their health and the environment, using chemicals strategically, and practicing true IPM,” Blauvelt said.

“Opportunities exist simply because there are people who demand higher levels of service and pest-free zones, and the industry has responded really well to that request.” PMP

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

