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Plumber Profile *Business Makeover 101*
 New owner leverages financial know-how to reshape established plumbing company.
 - By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Kyle Plumbing senior estimator and Vice President Lawrence Kram ensures a pipe on a multimillion dollar home project in the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, area is installed straight. Kyle Plumbing, founded in 1993, offers residential service/repair plumbing and new-construction plumbing services throughout the Deerfield, Florida area. (Photography by Chris Tilley)

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“THEIR SUPPORT IS PHENOMENAL.”

PROfile

NuFlow Certified Contractor

Since becoming a NuFlow Certified Contractor, Ryan Smith's plumbing company has grown dramatically.

“The change has been amazing. NuFlow separates us from the competition. We are now considered the drain service specialists in our area. A lot of our biggest jobs come from sub-contracts from other plumbing companies.”

To get started, NuFlow sent a trainer to work with his team.

“The learning process was great. The NuFlow trainer really taught us the ins and outs of the process.”

In addition to residential jobs, Ryan and his team have completed several larger projects on commercial size buildings. He has expanded his crew to keep up with the work, half plumbers and half pipe liners, and continues to grow his pipe lining business.

“We've grown way beyond the just one guy and a truck business like we started. We broke a million dollars in revenue and have more commercial size projects coming up.”



Ryan Smith,
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Cory Dellenbach

Pipes of Diversity

The key to innovation and success in the plumbing industry is the many different backgrounds your team could have

When you attend industry trade shows or your state association meetings and gatherings, what is one thing that you notice? For me, it's the varied backgrounds, experiences and perspectives throughout all of the attendees.

Not everyone is the same and that's not just beneficial but essential for growth and innovation in this industry. In the plumbing industry, where problem-solving and adaptability are important, the value of a diverse team cannot be overstated.

Plumber magazine takes pride in spotlighting the many ways in which different employment backgrounds contribute to the success of plumbing companies worldwide. From seasoned industry veterans to newcomers with fresh perspectives, each individual brings a unique set of skills and insights to the table.

Consider, for instance, the seasoned plumber who has spent decades honing their craft. With years of hands-on experience under their belt, they possess an invaluable wealth of knowledge about the intricacies of plumbing systems, from traditional fixtures to cutting-edge technologies. Their expertise serves as a foundation, providing guidance and mentorship to younger colleagues while ensuring the highest standards of workmanship are maintained.

Yet, alongside these seasoned professionals, we find individuals from nontraditional backgrounds making significant contributions to the industry.

Take, for example, Kevin Couper, who came from the personal wealth-management field. He was about to open his own finance company, but then decided a career move was in order and it was a big one. As you'll read in this issue's profile on Kyle Plumbing, Couper went out and purchased a Florida plumbing company.

Armed with a background in finance, Couper brought a fresh perspective to the field, offering innovative solutions to complex challenges. His ability to apply principles from other disciplines fostered creativity and pushed the boundaries of what that company was doing.

diversity in fostering inclusivity and understanding within the workplace. Employees from different cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds bring with them rich experiences that broaden the company's perspective and enhance its ability to connect with diverse clientele. In an industry as people-oriented as plumbing, the ability to communicate effectively and empathize with clients from all walks of life is a crucial asset.

Embracing diversity isn't just about checking boxes — it's about harnessing the collective power of varied perspectives to drive innovation and competitiveness. Research has consistently shown that diverse teams outperform homogenous ones, bringing fresh ideas to the table and challenging employees. By fostering an inclusive environment where every voice is valued and heard, companies can unlock the full potential of their workforce and stay ahead in an ever-evolving marketplace.

BRINGING SUCCESS STORIES

We've had the privilege of showcasing numerous success stories that exemplify the power of diverse employment backgrounds. From the plumber who built their business from the ground up with no plumbing experience to the ones who grew up with a long family history in plumbing, our industry thrives on the contributions of individuals from all walks of life. By highlighting these stories, we aim to inspire others to embrace diversity and harness its transformative potential.

The success of a plumbing company is inextricably linked to the diversity of its workforce. By embracing employees from different backgrounds and experiences, companies can tap into a vast reservoir of talent and creativity, driving innovation and competitiveness in the industry.

Plumber remains committed to celebrating the diverse voices that make our industry great and advocating for a more inclusive future. Let me know how you have brought diversity to your company. Email me at editor@plumbermag.com.

Enjoy this issue! 📧

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

“Office politics can include anything from alliance-forming to under-the-table negotiations, and often, it erodes trust and morale across the entire team.”

— 8 Tips for Keeping Office Politics Out of Your Workplace

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SMART BUSINESS

Components of a Good Fleet Safety Program

An effective fleet safety program requires time and resources to develop and implement, but the results are worth it because of the rising costs of vehicle repairs, insurance premiums and insurance claims. From the vehicles themselves to the employees driving them, this online exclusive covers key components to a comprehensive company fleet safety program.

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PARTNERSHIP PERKS

Becoming a Brand Ambassador

In this online exclusive, Colin Luttrell, owner of Colin the Plumber in Rochester, New York, explains what it's like to be part of a manufacturer's brand ambassador program and the benefits he feels he has gotten out of it. ▶ plumbermag.com/featured

HAVING A PLAN

Mastering Project Bidding and Execution

The success of a job not only relies on technical skills but also on careful planning, efficient project management and accurate bidding. Going over on material costs and labor can seriously jeopardize profitability, and thus it is crucial to master the bidding and job completion process. In this online exclusive, regular contributor Anthony Pacilla discusses key strategies and processes that will help contractors avoid “killing” a job, ensuring that projects are completed within specified budgets. ▶ plumbermag.com/featured



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BUSINESS MAKEOVER 101

New owner leverages financial know-how to reshape established plumbing company

By Ken Wysocky | Photography by Chris Tilley



Kyle Plumbing, Deerfield Beach, Florida

OWNER	Kevin Couper
FOUNDED	1993
EMPLOYEES	25
SERVICES	Residential service/repair plumbing and new-construction plumbing
SERVICE AREA	50-mile radius around Deerfield
WEBSITE	kyleplumbing.com
SOCIAL MEDIA	linkedin.com/company/kyle-plumbing/

I

t's not unusual for plumbers to be very proficient at plying their trade, while at the same time spending years learning how to run a company profitably.

But Kevin Couper is an outlier — a numbers guy who flipped the script by bringing a strong background in finance and business development to Kyle Plumbing in Deerfield Beach, Florida, where he's learning the plumbing industry from a choice front-row seat.

So far, so good. Couper bought the company in June 2023 and it generated about \$2.5 million in revenue last year during the seven months he's owned it. But thanks to comprehensive modernization measures — including a management reorganization, the creation of a customized flat-rate pricing book, the adoption of paperless technology and development of a new sales approach for technicians — the company is on pace to reach nearly \$8 million in service revenue alone in 2024, he says.

"Sometimes it's helpful to have an outside perspective — come in from the business side and not know anything about plumbing," says Couper. "Usually the two

worlds of business and plumbing don't combine very well, but we've morphed the two together.

"I know it sounds counterintuitive — someone with a finance background and no plumbing experience buys a plumbing business," he adds. "But it's working out great."

The name of the corporation Couper established to buy the company, Baby Blue Plumbing Inc., reflects the merger of the two disciplines, he says.

"When you combine blue collar with white collar, you get baby blue, as well as the best of both worlds," he explains. "And being a business guy who doesn't do plumbing frees me up to keep looking at the big picture."

“ We avoid cheesy, high-pressure sales tactics and canned presentations. We treat every customer like they're a family member. You can use a commission-based structure without being a scumbag.”

Kevin Couper



◀ From left, senior estimator and Vice President Lawrence Kram, general manager Louie Embroz, and owner Kevin Couper look over blueprints of a multimillion dollar home project that the Kyle Plumbing team is handling in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



◀ General manager Louie Embroz carefully trims a pipe on a home project using a Milwaukee Tool Sawzall.

Couper attributes the large year-to-year revenue leap to better systems and processes coupled with a great management team and his business, marketing, finance and leadership skills.

“My goal was to take something outdated with a good bone structure, modernize it and compete in that space,” he says while explaining his drastic career U-turn from finance to plumbing. “But it’s not just about me — it’s also about improving the lives of employees.

“There are too many companies in the blue-collar space that pay their employees bare minimum and then reap the profits,” Couper says. “But I saw an opportunity to change that — create an environment that would be hard for other companies to compete against.

“You only have one life to live, so you might as well enjoy it and challenge yourself.”

ABRUPT CAREER CHANGE

Couper had spent 13 years in the personal wealth-management field after earning a degree in finance and entrepreneurship. He was about to open his own finance company, but then decided a career shake-up was in order.

Continued ▶

Using Technology to Maximize Efficiency and Profitability

When Kevin Couper bought Kyle Plumbing in Deerfield Beach, Florida, in 2023, he knew the company had what house flippers might call “good bones.”

But the 37-year-old entrepreneur, who has a strong financial-services background, also knew the business would need significant modernization to maximize its potential. So he systematically began to integrate digital technologies into the business, starting with ServiceTitan, a business-management software that handles everything from dispatching, financial reporting and job scheduling to customer payments, payroll and job estimates.

“It was a game-changer financially,” he says. “We had tons of customers that owed us money and had to make a lot of phone calls to collect payments.

“Now all our technicians have iPads and use ServiceTitan to create invoices, build estimates and collect credit card payments right there on the job.”

The transition wasn’t easy, Couper says.

“The hardest part was getting everyone on board — there was a lot of pushback and the transition involved a lot of training,” he notes. “But I was lucky because the existing system was outdated enough that there was no technical support or software upgrades available anymore. So everyone knew we’d have to make a change sooner or later.”

The transition was somewhat eased by the fact that Couper had all office staff attend presentations from vendors and gathered feedback. This approach eventually led to unanimous support for ServiceTitan, he says.

Couper also adopted Profit Rhino, a digital platform that allows contractors to build customized flat-rate price books.

“It was a tremendous help for basically building a price book from scratch,” Couper says.

“Before, the company relied on time-and-materials pricing. But flat-rate pricing allows us to quote an accurate price and avoid dealing with customers that otherwise would be annoyed or upset about how long technicians were on a job (compared to the estimate).”

The company also embraced an inventory-management software platform from Ply Financial. It relies on a barcode system to track inventory both in the company’s warehouse and on technicians’ trucks, he says.

“You can even set specific minimums for part inventory on trucks that trigger automatic purchase-order requests to our warehouse manager when inventories get too low,” Couper explains. “It really helps keep our trucks fully replenished with parts.”

The system also can review parts prices from different vendors and automatically selects the lowest price — and then tracks the savings that results, he says.

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- ◀ Construction technician Kim Smith performs a visual inspection while on the job site of a home project the company is handling in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.
- ▼ Construction Superintendent Todd Coyne pulls equipment from the back of one of the company's service trucks.



“I put in long hours but it never feels like work. I like problem-solving, creating things and competing — and I get all of that with this business.”
Kevin Couper

“I was bored, as well as sick of the corporate red tape that kills your entrepreneurial spirit,” Couper recalls. “It’s really hard to be innovative and entrepreneurial in the financial space. It got to the point where I didn’t want to get out of bed in the morning to go to work.”

At first, the 37-year-old entrepreneur considered buying a franchise. But then he switched gears and focused on acquiring a company. Plumbing seemed like a good option because it’s essentially a recessionproof industry, he says.

Kyle Plumbing, which was for sale because the owner was retiring, was the 20th company Couper considered buying. The business checked off a lot of boxes: a good location, the right number of employees (about 25), a great culture and reputation, solid revenue generation and outdated processes and systems.

“Everything was done with paper,” Couper says. “The customer-relations management system that kept track of customers’ names and addresses was outdated and there were no coordinated systems internally.

“Technicians typed up invoices in their trucks on laptops bolted to the passenger seat and printed them out on a printer set on the center console,” he continues.

“There was no price book or inventory management system, so you couldn’t tell what was on the trucks or in the warehouse.

“But the owner still was very successful,” Couper adds. “Part of the appeal was the chance to make an immediate impact.”

PUSH FOR BETTER EFFICIENCY, PROFITABILITY

One of the first things Couper did to modernize the business was subscribe to ServiceTitan, a business-management software that handles everything from dispatching, financial reporting and job scheduling to customer payments, payroll and job estimates.

Couper also steered the company toward more service plumbing work and less new-construction plumbing, to

the point where construction-related work now generates about 50% of the company's revenue, compared to 70% before. Couper wants to eventually reduce it to 30%.

Why make this switch? Residential work generates better cash flow, he says.

"When I bought the company, I didn't have the best understanding of how construction plumbing worked," he notes. "I found it pretty crazy that you can do a \$300,000 job and not get the first payment for 30 to 45 days or more.

"I have huge issues with tedious and time-consuming red tape, so we re-evaluated our business relationships with contractors we had inherited and created new relationships with contractors that have more fair billing processes."

Couper also implemented a flat-rate pricing system, using a software product called Profit Rhino, and invested in an inventory-management software platform from Ply Financial.

Changes to the company's management structure also helped drive growth. Couper now has one general manager who handles the service side of the business and another one that manages the new plumbing construction side of the business, while he manages the overall business.

Couper also hired a human resources/culture manager and divided up field supervision duties for new construction between two field supervisors.

"It's provided tremendous benefits," he says of the reorganization. "It gives me the time to stay on top of things better and be tuned in to what's going on company-wide."

These redefined roles also help to minimize what Couper calls "job-creep," where employees keep assuming more and more responsibilities, which leads to frustration and confusion.

RELIEVING EMPLOYEE CONCERNS

Couper says he also took steps to counter employee fears about layoffs. He accomplished this through one-on-one meetings with employees that helped him get to know them, build better relationships and learn what changes they'd like to see.

Because some of the requested changes would take time to implement, Couper made sure to "pick their brains" about little things that could be accomplished quickly. Picking this proverbial low-hanging fruit helped build trust early on because employees could see results quickly, he explains.



"Being great means always being ready to learn and share, leading by example, and celebrating success with others. The essence of greatness lies in continuous improvement – striving to be better today than yesterday."

Brian Williams,
Founder and Visionary
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► Construction apprentice Joseph Dangler seals up a recently installed PVC pipe on the job of a home project.

For example, some technicians wanted better-quality uniforms made from a more breathable material, which was accomplished fairly quickly and easily, he says.

Just about every employee also received a pay raise, determined by market research on prevailing wages.

“Before, for example, everyone on the construction side got a one-dollar-per-hour raise once every year, which isn’t good,” he says. “We also made them eligible for performance bonuses, which gives them more motivation to work harder and make fewer mistakes.”

Furthermore, employees now are eligible for raises every time they master a certain set of skills. This helps to boost employee-retention efforts because people are less inclined to leave the company for a job that perhaps pays \$2 or \$3 more an hour, he notes.

DIFFERENT CUSTOMER APPROACH

On the plumbing service end of the business, technicians now get commissions if they hit certain revenue thresholds. But there are no sales quotes to meet, Couper says.

Couper also implemented a new sales process for technicians in which they look for other plumbing issues along with whatever problem they came to fix.

“We don’t want them to just fix the symptoms,” Couper explains. “We want them to also try to cure everything else at one time, as opposed to fixing a broken toilet and then just leaving.

“We at least want them to have a conversation with customers and build relationships,” he continues. “Customers tend to like that because they like to know about problems ahead of time. And if something goes wrong later on, you at least can say you pointed it out as a potential problem.

“I just think it’s the right thing to do.”

Couper recognizes that there’s a thin line between informing customers about recommended service and high-pressure sales tactics. As such, technicians are instructed to present three different options — a good, better and best approach — as well as educate customers about all recommendations so they have some context for making informed decisions, he says.



“Sometimes it’s helpful to have an outside perspective — come in from the business side and not know anything about plumbing. Usually the two worlds of business and plumbing don’t combine very well, but we’ve morphed the two together.”

Kevin Couper

“We avoid cheesy, high-pressure sales tactics and canned presentations,” he says. “We treat every customer like they’re a family member.

“You can use a commission-based structure without being a scumbag.”

EMPHASIS ON TRAINING, EQUIPMENT

The company also emphasizes ongoing training, which serves as a great tool for both attracting and retaining technicians. For instance, technicians recently received training from Rinnai for working on tankless water heaters and the company also creates its own training modules to strengthen technicians’ skills where needed, Couper says.

“We pay them for the time they spend in training,” he notes. “We’re constantly keeping them attuned to new technology and products. Training is a big piece of the retention puzzle, along with good pay and work/life balance.”

Continued ►

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Plumber Profile

► The team at Kyle Plumbing includes, from left, Christopher Violette, backflow specialist; Ignacio Castillo, backflow specialist; Lawrence Kram, vice president and senior estimator; Kevin Couper, owner; and Louie Embroz, general manager.

Good equipment also serves as an employee-retention tool. On the service side, the company owns six vehicles: four Ford Transits and two Ford Maverick pickup trucks. Advanced Work Vans outfitted the trucks with Adrian Steel storage systems.

The company also has invested in drain machines from RIDGID and Milwaukee Tool; water jetters custom-built by Proline Equipment; leak detection systems and pipeline inspection cameras from RIDGID and Milwaukee Tool; a Gen-Ear LE water-leak detection system from General Pipe Cleaners (a division of General Wire Spring Co.); and a One Edge Pro thermal camera from Teledyne FLIR.

In addition, the company also relies on HALO water filtration products and systems; Moen, Kohler and TOTO toilets and fixtures; Rheem and A. O. Smith water heaters; ACO drains for commercial customers; Rinnai and Navien tankless water heaters; and backflow-prevention parts from Watts and Zurn Wilkins.

OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, Couper expects continued growth, but in a manageable way. One growth avenue could be




acquisitions of other plumbing companies and another could include opening more facilities in various cities in Florida.

“We’re not going to grow just to grow,” he says. “It has to make sense.”

Looking back, Couper says he has no regrets about his decision to trade in mutual funds for monkey wrenches.

“I’m very, very happy,” he says. “I took a 60% pay cut to buy and run a plumbing business, but it was worth it to do something you enjoy every day.

“I put in long hours but it never feels like work,” Couper continues. “I like problem-solving, creating things and competing — and I get all of that with this business. Plus, I get to make our employees’ lives better, too.

“It’s definitely a win-win situation.” 

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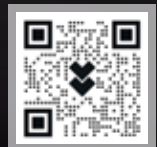


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Joan Koehne

Driving Toward Safety

From the vehicles themselves to the employees driving them, there are a number of components to a comprehensive company fleet safety program *By Joan Koehne*

Millions of motor vehicle accidents occur each year in the U.S. With so many drivers on the road every day and commercial insurance premiums and vehicle repair costs on the rise, organizations can't afford to neglect driver and vehicle safety policies. Developing an effective fleet safety program lowers an organization's risk level and protects company employees and assets.

John Brengosz, loss control consultant for R&R Insurance in Waukesha, Wisconsin, encourages organizations to take fleet safety seriously, because the consequences of a lackadaisical attitude can be deadly.

"Most people think the No. 1 way folks die at work is from falls," he says. "It's actually vehicle or driving-related fatalities."

According to Brengosz, vehicles create the single largest risk exposure for a company, and personal injury lawyers complicate the issue.

"That's part of the problem now with fleet safety," he says. "These commercials run all the time, and they're encouraging people to make a claim if they're involved in an auto accident."

Brengosz says he knows that developing and executing a fleet safety program takes time and personnel.

"The good news is, a lot of fleet safety programs don't cost a lot of money," he says.

"It's good to have an annual training on defensive driving and what company rules are for maintenance and operating vehicles, so everybody's aware of them. ... Driving is very much a habit. We want them to form good habits."

John Brengosz

VEHICLE POLICIES

An effective fleet safety program focuses on three elements: vehicles, drivers and policies governing them both.

If an organization provides vehicles, then it needs to set some standards. Brengosz asks clients these types of questions:

- Are you an organization that likes to run vehicles forever and just try to keep them up?
- Do you have a replacement schedule?
- How much are they driven?
- How far are they driven?
- How much are they driven on personal time?

He advises clients to develop vehicle use, replacement, maintenance and inspection policies.

"Remember what could happen if you got a vehicle in an accident and it turns out you haven't kept up at all with maintenance," he says.

Organizations can establish frequency guidelines for routine service based on the vehicle manufacturer's recommended mileage or engine hours. They can track maintenance themselves or have the service provider track it. In addition to routine maintenance, organizations also should conduct periodic vehicle inspections.

"How do we know what the vehicle's condition is if we're not formally looking at it?" Brengosz says.

He recommends checking the oil and inspecting the headlights, taillights, tires and the overall condition of the vehicle. Look for dents or scrapes, because drivers don't necessarily fill out accident forms like they should. In Brengosz's experience, vehicle inspections sometimes turn up surprises.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

The second element of fleet safety involves drivers. Questions to answer include: Who is allowed to operate the vehicle? If an employee takes the vehicle

home, is anyone other than the employee allowed to drive the vehicle?

“Don’t toss the keys to just anybody,” Brengosz says.

He advises organizations to screen drivers at the time of hire by requesting their motor vehicle record from a governmental or private service. An MVR, also known as a driver’s abstract, reports a driver’s accidents and violations. Once you pull an MVR, the next step is to compare the record to the company’s formal policy and the standards of an acceptable driving record.

“When I hear somebody say, ‘We just eyeball an MVR and make a call on it,’ the problem with doing that is a human’s ability to rationalize,” Brengosz says. “They might rationalize that their No. 1 salesperson or best repair person should be allowed to drive, despite their bad driving record. How is it going to look at a trial if you pulled an MVR, it was poor and you still allowed the employee to drive? My big advice is, if you’re going to take the time and expense to run the MVRs, have a formal screening system that allows you to compare an MVR to your own policy and make the call.”

Organizations should screen all employees with a vehicle assigned to them, employees authorized to use a

vehicle or operate a pool vehicle and employee spouses who are allowed to drive a vehicle the employee takes home.

“Trust me when I tell you, I have had some cases where some of the spouse’s driving records are horrendous. If you’re not checking them, you wouldn’t catch that,” Brengosz says.

FLEET SAFETY MANUAL KEYS

Three basic policies should be included in an effective fleet safety manual.

The first is driver eligibility and MVR criteria. The second is a personal use policy. Is a driver allowed to use the vehicle for personal use? Out-of-state vacations? What family members are permitted to drive, and what screening do they need to complete?

The third policy, a non-owned vehicle policy, refers to an employee’s use of a private vehicle or rental vehicle for company business.

“For starters, we need them to provide proof of adequate insurance coverage of their own,” Brengosz says. “It’s also a good idea for them to prove, at least once a year, that they have a valid driver’s license.”

To reinforce these policies and other components of a

Continued ▶

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fleet safety program, Brengosz recommends annual training.

“It’s good to have an annual training on defensive driving and what company rules are for maintenance and operating vehicles, so everybody’s aware of them,” he says.

In a training session, organizations can reinforce safety rules regarding seat belt use, traffic laws, locking vehicles, distracted driving and backing up a vehicle.

“Driving is very much a habit. We want them to form good habits,” Brengosz says.

EQUIPPED FOR ACCIDENT REPORTING

Post-accident reporting should be discussed at least annually.

“You don’t have to have a horrible, terrible crash to have lawsuits,” Brengosz says.

Thus, every company vehicle should be equipped with an Accident Reporting Kit.


“It’s good to have something that the driver can fall back on to make sure they document the scene, get the names of witnesses, and just do a good job of having the insurance company handle the claim,” Brengosz says.

Employees involved in an accident should take good notes and clear photos.

“Insurance company claims adjusters say, all the time, that the party that does the best job documenting the damage and what happened generally wins when it comes to these accidents,” Brengosz says.

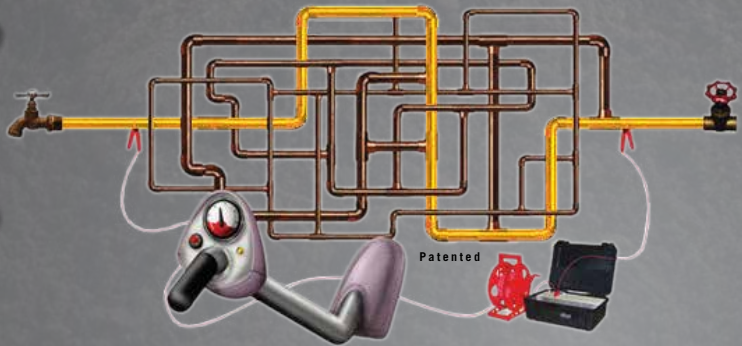
To improve their fleet safety program, many organizations invest in GPS monitoring to track speed, location, idling time and other details. They also mount HD cameras on the front and back to show what drivers see at the time of an accident.

“There are all sorts of really cool monitoring you can do,” Brengosz says. “If you’re going to pay for that service, be sure you’re using the data and talking to your drivers.”

An effective fleet safety program requires time and resources to develop and implement, but the results are worth it because of the rising costs of vehicle repairs, insurance premiums and insurance claims. Protect your vehicles, employees, company assets and reputation with a comprehensive fleet safety program. 

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Cracking the Email Code

Quick and consistent written communication remains an important service tool. But how do you get them to read your messages?

By Lisa Apolinski

Not so surprising statistics according to online career networking site Zippia: nearly 350 billion emails are sent worldwide every day. But here is a stunning statistic — the average email open rate is only 18%. Less than two out of every 10 emails sent are ever opened. Yikes!

Many businesses are hoping to crack the email code to get more of their emails read. After all, emails remain one of the fastest and budget-friendly ways to connect with prospects and customers. When emails are sent to current customers, how can you increase the chances that your digital correspondence will be read? Follow these five tips for better digital customer communication:

Tip 1: Follow up both consistently and in short order. The No. 1 complaint regarding emails, besides spam practices, is that businesses only follow up on items that directly affect them (such as requesting payment). When businesses focus only on the financial transaction, they move into a commoditized conversation. If your business wants to increase trust and improve communications, be consistent with how often and how clearly email follow-ups will occur. Set a higher expectation for client communication and follow through on that expectation to immediately impact the email exchange.

Tip 2: Over communicate to manage digital expectations. Nothing can be more frustrating than not fully understanding the expectations for customer service, and this includes what is communicated when. If the fastest time you can be expected to email back a client is 48 hours, simply be sure to state this so the customer understands when you will report back (even if the report back is to explain that you are still working on the issue). With this focus on overcommunication, clients will feel in-the-know and will have a working understanding of what to expect and when.

Tip 3: Communicate what you have agreed to. When you have concluded a meeting or even an email exchange, take a few minutes to reiterate what each of you have agreed

If something was agreed to and cannot be completed, how will you work with the customer to come to a resolution? The reason for the miss is not the focus here – the action that will be taken to get back on track is.

to complete and when the items are expected to be completed. This not only keeps a simple list of action items, it also can help a customer by having an opportunity to address any misunderstanding or further questions. And action items in writing can be referred to if any issues come up down the line.

Tip 4: Communicate what you have completed. Just because you have completed a task does not mean your customer knows it. When action items you have agreed to have been completed, take 30 seconds to send a quick email to let the customer know the item is now complete. This removes the guessing game for your customer and provides a quick update so the movement in the process is documented. This also helps establish trust between your business and the customer since you are making sure items have been completed and you are providing a little more peace of mind.

Tip 5: Acknowledge what was missed and an action plan to address. If something in the action item list gets missed or a completion date moves, be sure to communicate that to the customer. But this goes beyond a “sorry for the inconvenience” to how your organization will address the slip so the action item gets completed. What is the plan to get back on schedule and move forward? If something was agreed to and cannot be completed, how will you work with the customer to come to a resolution? The reason for the miss is not the focus here — the action that will be taken to get back on track is.



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ONE MORE THING...

One additional piece of advice — use technology to help keep up with communication. There are several ways to use technology to improve digital communications. Set reminders for activities that are due to customers. Have an initial automatic email go out to manage digital expectations on response times. Create a template to help you share action items in a clear fashion. Technology is there to help lessen the digital load.

Focusing on better digital client communications can have an immediate impact on how customers view your business and your integrity. Remember that there are two people in this email exchange, and both want to be heard and understood.

Even if missteps happen, commit each workday to following these tips and making the focus on the communication with the customer. When that focus is clear, the customer will see your business showing up in a whole new way. And that will drive strong customer engagement and a business relationship that will last. 📧

Lisa Apolinski is a speaker, digital strategist, author and founder of 3 Dog Write. Her latest book, Grow Your Market Share In A Zombie Apocalypse, provides insights for businesses to survive in a difficult economy. For more information, visit 3dogwrite.com.

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Anthony Pacilla

Putting It All Back Together

Following an outside project, it's important for plumbers to be clear with customers on what to expect when restoring yards

By Anthony Pacilla

I am convinced that not a single homeowner in the history of world plumbing has ever paid attention to the plumber or plumbing company when they say, "Landscaping is not included."

You know the drill; you tell the homeowner both in writing, and in person that once you replace the waterline, you'll do your best to put the yard back, but they will eventually have to get a landscaper to finish it. You replace the water service, do your best to put the yard back, make it look nice and now that the homeowners' problem is fixed, they come roaring out asking why you didn't do a better job putting it back.

There are more than a few annoyances in the plumbing profession, but this one is probably one of the more common complaints from all parties involved.

Even though none of us will ever truly solve this problem, I've got a few tips for putting the yard back and how to write it up and talk about it before, during and after the dig.

WRITING OUT DEFINITIONS

Nearly every contractor writes something like "no landscaping included," but what does that verbiage mean to the homeowner? Most homeowners look at landscaping like the local college campus, golf course, park entrance or resort. They automatically think of green grass, shrubs, flowers, pavers, patios, mulch beds, sprinkler systems, trees and edging.

When you say, "No landscaping included," the homeowner thinks, "No big deal! I didn't expect the plumber to do my landscaping anyway!" When you write up your contracts, "landscaping" must be spelled out. I suggest using the terms demolition grade, rough grade and finish grade. Define demolition grade as something along the lines of an attempt to refill the trench with the dirt that was removed during excavation/demolition and removal of foreign objects and large rocks/boulders. Define rough grade as flattening,

It's an overly used cliché, but setting expectations is essential. Before the project begins, ensure the homeowner is aware of the project's scope.

raking, and generally transforming the construction site to have a specific slope or grade. Define finished grade as bringing the surface to a desired elevation tolerance and providing a smooth surface.

After you define the terms, say that you'll provide demolition grade only. This way, the expectations are clear. We are plumbers, not landscapers.

It would help if you also considered adding an option in your contract to have the job site professionally landscaped. Many homeowners want a turnkey project and want to avoid having to find a good landscaper. If you know a good landscaping company, add their price to your bid as a line item. Make the homeowner check whether they want the project professionally landscaped for the extra fee. If they don't want the additional expense, that's OK.

If you do your landscaping at the end of the job, make sure you keep that as a separate line item and make the homeowner decide. If you provide turnkey jobs all under one price, think about what it will take to do that quality job. Do you have to bring rolls of plastic for the spoil? Are you taking every scoop of dirt offsite and bringing fresh gravel, sand or topsoil in? Are you going to need filter fabric? Rolls of straw? Yard pins? Grass seed? Plate compactors? Sod strippers? All of that costs a lot of money and should come at a premium price. Keep that in mind.

TALKING ABOUT THE PROJECT

It's an overly used cliché, but setting expectations is essential. Before the project begins, ensure the homeowner

is aware of the project's scope. Explain what part of the yard will have to come out and where the spoil will be set and if the project will be left with a hump for settling. Let the homeowner know if they should expect settling and where the means of ingress/egress be for the heavy equipment.

During the project, invite the homeowner out and answer any questions. This will allow them to say what's on their mind and ask questions. It will also allow you to gauge how far off the expectation path you let them get.

As you start to wrap up the project, invite them out and let them know you will start wrapping things up. This will give them one last opportunity to verbalize concerns or ask any final questions before you load up the equipment and head out. It's a bad idea to load up all the equipment and head out only to have the homeowner come out and ask if you could move one piece of dirt.

GETTING IT PERFECT

The perfect standard for putting a yard back depends on how long, how deep, what kind of grass and what kind of soil. Suppose you have a minor repair in a very nice yard. In that case, I suggest excavating straight into the back of a dump and hauling away all the spoil — filling it back in with compacted gravel compacted every foot or so with a plate compactor, landscaping fabric and finally top-

soil, seed and straw.

If you have access to a sod cutter, you can also cut the sod and set the sod aside before you start and put it back when you are done. If it's a longer dig, maybe consider running plywood or thick mil plastic on the side of the trench to make putting it back easier. Just remember that compaction is critical.

There are also significant differences between excavating for line replacements throughout the country. Up north, there are routinely sewer lines over 10 feet deep with hundreds, if not thousands, of tons of spoil and solid rock. They may be shallower in other parts of the country and others deeper. Every area is different.

Let me make one last point crystal clear. This is about yard work, not work on the sidewalk or street. That's an entirely different thing. 📧

Anthony Pacilla has been in the trades since he was 9 years old (family business). He started cleaning toilets, mopping floors and putting fittings away in the warehouse. As he picked up skills, he would add becoming a ground man and laborer. When he was ready, Pacilla became an apprentice and then a journeyman plumber. He graduated college with a business and economics degree and immediately wanted to come back to work in the family business. A few years ago, Pacilla became a licensed master plumber. To contact Pacilla, email editor@plumbermag.com.

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Faucets

Barber Wilsons Milne Collection

The **Milne Collection** from **Barber Wilsons** consists of wall and deck faucets and showers characterized with strong yet elegant cross top handles and clean lines. Crafted of solid brass, the faucets are offered in a wide variety of "living" and "established" finishes — including polished brass, brushed brass, weathered bronze, matte bronze, matte black, polished nickel, brushed nickel, satin nickel, brushed copper, satin copper, brushed chrome, polished chrome, satin chrome, polished gold, brushed gold, polished inca and brushed inca. **800-727-6317; www.barberwilsons.com**





Elkay Avado

Get fresh, better-tasting filtered water for drinking and cooking straight from your kitchen sink tap. The **Avado** two-in-one filtered kitchen faucet from Elkay delivers both hot and cold non-filtered water and cold filtered water. Minimize plastic bottle waste — fill your glass, pitcher, stockpot and dog bowl right at the sink. Plus, there's no need to install a second beverage faucet or rely on inefficient refrigerator filters. This drinking water faucet includes a filter that is tested and certified to NSF/ANSI 42, 53 and 401 to reduce some of the most harmful contaminants: PFOA/PFOS (PFAS), lead, microplastics and more. **630-574-8484; www.elkay.com**



PRIER Products 526 Series Boiler Drain

The **526 Series Boiler Drain** from **PRIER Products** includes a heavy-duty lead-free brass body (certified to NSF 372), cast metal operating handle with brass mounting screw and a solid brass fast-travel stem with ACME threads. It comes in the choice of FPT, MPT and SWT inlet connections with a 3/4-inch garden hose connection outlet for universal use. Each valve is individually tested, features EPDM smooth turn seals for longer wear life and provides unobstructed waterways for greater flow rates. It comes standard with a green-colored handle, but can be customized with red or blue optional color choices. **800-362-9055; www.prier.com**

Fittings

Aquaguard WAGS Valve

WAGS Valves from **Aquaguard** can stop a leaking water heater tank from continuously refilling and dripping, or until the tank fails catastrophically. The shut-off valve halts the incoming water supply, and on gas-fired units, shuts off the gas supply to ensure the home's safety from water heater failure. They are mechanically operated; meaning no maintenance, no electricity or no battery checks are required. They sit in a drip pan under the water heater and are activated when



leaking water accumulates to a predetermined level in the pan. Once activated, the industrial-duty, one-shot safety valve shuts off the water and gas supply if so equipped. A red tab pops out to indicate valve activation. **844-438-9247; www.wagsvalve.com**

BrassCraft Stainless Steel Braided Water Heater Connectors

BrassCraft Stainless Steel Braided Water Heater Connectors offer versatility for most water heater installations. Available in 18- and 24-inch lengths with a variety of connection types, this line of water heater connectors offers a flexible construction that connects the water supply to water heaters in confined spaces, bringing flexibility to any installation. There's no cutting or soldering required, as the flexible water heater connectors install quickly for a durable installation. They protect from the elements with the use of a reinforced PVC hose that helps provide a layer of protection against chlorine and chloramines in water distribution systems. The connectors' dielectric attributes eliminate the need to install an additional dielectric union, reducing time and installation costs. **877-272-7755; www.brasscraft.com**



REHAU, Building Solutions Division EVERLOC+

Designed for use with RAU-PEX UV shield PEXa pipe in potable water applications, the **EVERLOC+** compression-sleeve fitting system from **REHAU, Building Solutions Division** features both polymer and lead-free brass fittings in diameters up to 2 inches, as well as the **EVERLOC+** power tool. Connections are made using a two-step expansion and compression process, both performed by the power tool. First, the pipe is expanded, then the sleeve is actively compressed over the pipe and fitting for a secure connection that is immediately ready for pressure testing. The fitting system includes couplings, tees, elbows, transition fittings, multi-port tees and accessories in sizes from 3/8 through 2 inches. **800-247-9445; www.everlocplus.com**



Uponor TotalFit

TotalFit from **Uponor** is the professional-grade, engineered polymer, push-to-connect fitting solution that provides greater value for residential projects with the same versatility and speed as brass



push-to-connect fittings. Now, plumbers have a trusted, reliable push-to-connect fitting option in sizes from 1/2 to 1 inch that works with any copper tube size piping, including PEX, PE-RT, CPVC and copper. **800-321-4739; www.uponor.com**

Viega Brass Ball Valves

Viega Brass Ball Valves introduce multiple configurations, including a ProPress Ball Valve with drain, a ProPress to PureFlow Ball Valve, and PureFlow ball valves with or without drain. Each press brass ball valve comes standard with Smart Connect technology to help identify unpressed connections. The options feature factory-assembled EPDM sealing elements and stem seals, can withstand pressures up to 300 psi, and range in size from 1/2 to 1 inch. Easily transition from copper to PEX with the ProPress to PureFlow ball valve, available in both press and crimp options. Additionally, there is a threaded brass ball valve option with female pipe threads to help complete a project with one supplier. ProPress,



Fixtures

ADD-A-TRAP PRO

The ADD-A-TRAP PRO is a plumbing part that has a removable strainer intended for 1 1/2- and/or 1 1/4-inch drain pipes. By loosening a slip joint nut, the strainer can be removed for cleaning or retrieval of items. It was designed to replace the standard P-trap. By loosening the two slip joint nuts and removing the old P-trap, you can place the ADD-A-TRAP PRO in its place and tighten the two slip joint nuts. **330-750-0417; www.addatrap.com**



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CORRO-PROTEC Powered Anode Rods made of titanium stop corrosion, rotten egg smell and limescale buildup inside hot water tanks. Designed to last over 20 years, they are a long-term solution that don't require any maintenance. The power supply, plugged on top of the titanium anode rod, provides small electrical current that completely stops corrosion. With that unlimited source of protection, it can double the life of the tank and prevent unwanted reactions like the sulfur smell in hot water, limescale buildup inside the water heater and air in water pipes. Since the anodes won't deteriorate over time, they are 12 inches long and easy to install in a wide range of water heaters starting from 10 gallons to 120 gallons, including a specific model for Bradford White tanks. They fit on electric, gas, solar, hybrid, indirect and geothermal water heaters. 877-466-6660; www.corroprotec.com



Little Giant 6-Series

The **6-Series** sump pumps from **Little Giant** are designed for continuous duty usage in various residential and light industrial environments, including basements, crawl spaces, transformer vaults, loading docks or elevator pits. They take on the challenge of dewatering and water transfer with force. This pump is suitable for shallow, small-basin applications and produces 46 gpm at 5 feet of head while reaching a maximum shut-off of 18 feet. The pump utilizes multiple switch options with the most popular being the integral diaphragm, which has no external floats to hang up on pipes or basin walls. Due to the orientation of the diaphragm, this pump will not only fit into smaller pits and spaces, but also operate more reliably. 800-701-7894; www.littlegiant.com



Sump Pumps

Ashland Pump sump pumps

Ashland Pump sump pumps feature rugged cast iron construction to withstand tough conditions and provide long-lasting performance. Equipped with permanent split capacitor, continuous duty-rated motors and upper and lower ball bearings, these pumps are designed for efficiency and durability. The vortex impeller, made of thermoplastic for the 1/3 hp models and cast iron for the 1/2 hp models, ensures optimal water flow and debris-handling capabilities. They have a professional contractor-grade vertical switch with a switch guard for added safety and convenience. The 10-foot-long power cord provides flexibility in installation, making it easier to set up and operate the pump effectively. 855-281-6830; www.ashlandpump.com



Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Tech Tools app

The **Tech Tools** app from **Charlotte Pipe and Foundry** provides simple on-the-go tools for the plumbing industry. The app features a variety of calculators for things like expansion and contraction, temperature de-rating, and horizontal support spacing. The expansion and contraction calculator provides general direction in expansion loop, offset or change of direction design, and it accounts for the effects of expansion and contraction in both PVC and CPVC systems. This is important because plastic piping systems will expand and contract four to five times more than metallic systems. Along with calculators, users will find support resources, including dimensional catalogs, a chemical resistance guide, and an easy way to reach Charlotte Pipe's technical support team. 800-438-6091; www.charlottepipe.com



Dallas Specialty Internal Pipe Cutter

The **Internal Pipe Cutter** from **Dallas Specialty** has a free spinning shaft and blade that attaches easily to the chuck. It is quickly adjustable using the convenient twist/set handle. Simply release the twist/set handle and slide the guide collar over the shaft gauge to the correct depth, tighten the



twist/set handle, insert into pipe and cut. Cuts pipe 1 1/2 to 6 inches, and has an adjustable cutting depth of 1 to 6 inches. A safety collar prevents the blade and shaft from falling down the pipe. It is ideal for tight spaces, and for cutting pipes against walls and below concrete surfaces. A handle gives stability and control to the cutter. **800-222-5644; www.dallasspecialty.com**

Milwaukee Tool M12 Stick Transfer Pump

Milwaukee Tool's M12 Stick Transfer Pump transfers water without interruption, delivers superior filtration and eliminates manual pumping, according to the maker. Featuring a 36-inch submersible aluminum barrel, the pump has reach and inlet control to get to water in difficult-to-access areas such as trenches, storm drains and water meter boxes. Milwaukee's new HydroPass filter technology maximizes water flow in heavy debris to pump up to 9 gpm. The 360-degree filter minimizes downtime



caused by clogging. With a 15-foot maximum head height and an outlet compatible with a 3/4-inch garden hose, the water transfer pump pushes water out of pits, basins and over walls. **800-729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com**

RIDGID EZ Change Faucet Tool

Alleviate under-sink plumbing frustrations with the RIDGID EZ Change Faucet Tool, a multipurpose tool for installation and removal of faucets and sink strainers. Used to fasten and remove tab mounting nuts and supply line nuts, the tool has a short body for easy access in tight spaces and includes a shut-off valve wrench to assist with stubborn valves. The tool features a unique cubed insert that is compatible with a variety of common nut sizes and is ideal for most common two-, three-, four- and six-tab mounting nuts. In addition, it has a retainer for three- or four-slot strainer baskets and a 5/8-inch deep well socket that is ideal for single-hole mountings. **800-474-3443; www.ridgid.com**



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The Xirtec CPVC potable water piping system from IPEX USA is a fully certified, high-performance plumbing and mechanical solution for distributing drinking water, engineered with Corzan CPVC compound. With sizes from 1/2 to 6 inches in diameter, the system ensures perfect compatibility between pipes, fittings and valves, offering durability and resistance to chlorine and corrosion. The CPVC includes increased flow capacity and safety with flame spread and smoke development values meeting ASTM standards. Certified to ASTM and NSF 61, it provides outstanding photodegradation, creep stress and oxidation resistance. **800-463-9572; www.ipexna.com**



Water Conditioner

AquaMotion hot water recirculation kit

Plumbers can help reduce the water shortage by installing an AquaMotion hot water recirculation kit in all their customers' homes all over the US and Canada. It can help save 12,000 gallons of water every year and provide instant hot water comfort. There is a kit for every type of plumbing with hot water tanks or tankless heaters. These kits install in about 15 minutes and with a replacement heater it takes even less time. A Quick Selection Chart is available. Some customers like to set a time segment on the timer when they want hot water, others want to call for it with a wireless button or motion sensor or use the app to schedule time or on demand. **401-785-3000; www.aquamotionhvac.com**



Water Heaters

Bosch Thermotechnology GreenTronic 7000 T

The GreenTronic 7000 T from Bosch Thermotechnology utilizes efficient heat pump technology integrated into an electric storage water heater to meet all hot water needs. It can heat water efficiently with heat pump technology that takes energy from the surrounding area and transfers it into the tank of water. Back-up heating elements with 4.5 kW each are integrated to provide an extra boost of comfort. In addition, the product operates below 49 dB, which is comparable to a quiet refrigerator. Additional duct adaptors give flexibility of airflow and installation space. Customers can save up to \$2,000 on the cost of installation through the federal 25C tax credit, and even more through local rebates. **800-283-3787; www.bosch.us**



Bradford White Water Heaters Infiniti Series

The Infiniti GS and GR, part of Bradford White Water Heaters Infiniti Series of condensing tankless water heaters, feature a stainless-steel heat exchanger. With a high temperature setting of up to 185 degrees, cascade operation with mix of standard (GS) and recirculation (GR) models, common venting and optional commercial rack system and easy plumbing kits, the Infiniti GS and GR models are suitable for residential and commercial application and can be installed indoors or outdoors. The tankless water heaters have been certified by the Green Restaurant Association. All meet or exceed the latest Energy Star requirements and qualify for most utility rebate programs. **800-523-2931; www.bradfordwhite.com**



Heat-flo HO Series

The HO Series of indirect water heaters from Heat-flo are designed to operate with low primary water temperatures. These tanks are equipped with an oversized heat transfer coil, allowing the primary water more contact time with the domestic water and more heat to be extracted. When paired with a high efficiency boiler, the



water temperature being delivered to the coil can be set to 150 degrees F or lower, which allows the boiler to condense during the domestic water heating cycle, keeping the boiler performance in the high efficiency range. The tank is equally effective when paired with an air-to-water heat pump. The oversized coil is a match for the lower temperature outputs of this equipment. **508-278-2400; www.heat-flo.com**

Intellihot Legionator

Tired of waiting for hot water at a fixture far from the water heater? **Intellihot's Legionator** offers the solution with point-of-use water heating. Made to commercial standards, this tankless disinfecting water heater is ideal for kitchen and bathroom sinks where bacteria silently build up in aerators and faucets. Water is heated with quartz tubes using infrared technology, allowing this water heater to effectively combat scale formation typically associated with other point-of-use water heaters. It combats bacteria by producing and injecting ozone into the water. This highly effective disinfectant destroys the cell walls of bacteria, keeping you and your family safer against waterborne diseases. As the ozone-treated water travels to the fixture, it disinfects the internal surfaces of the water system all the way to the faucet itself. **866-692-6791; www.intellihot.com**



Rheem ProTerra Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater

The **Rheem ProTerra Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater** delivers impressive savings for homeowners — right away with available local utility rebates and up to \$2,000 in tax credits and ongoing with up to \$491 in energy cost savings each year. Its innovative design installs in more places with zero side clearance requirement and the same footprint as standard electric water heaters of like capacity. Front-facing service components and advanced diagnostics accessible through the on-unit display or Rheem's Contractor App enable easy and faster servicing. It has built-in leak detection and auto-shutoff that limits water loss from the tank to no more than 20 ounces. **800-621-5622; www.rheem.com**



Noritz America EZ Series

Noritz America's EZ Series of high-efficiency, residential, condensing tankless water heaters streamlines the shift from traditional storage-tank models. With top-mounted, hot- and cold-water connections, it simplifies tankless-for-tank replacements. Energy Star-rated, the product offering delivers up to 199,900 Btu/h and a maximum flow rate of 11.1 gpm. The Steady Btu Mode ensures consistent performance and is ideal for warmer locales with high incoming water temperatures. A UEF of 0.96 ensures significant energy savings and lower monthly fuel bills. **714-433-2905; www.noritz.com**

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CSWI appoints Jeff Underwood president of RectorSeal

Jeff Underwood has been appointed president of RectorSeal, a wholly owned subsidiary of CSW Industrials. Underwood joined RectorSeal in 2018 and previously led sales and marketing for the company. With this promotion, he is also now senior vice president of CSWI and general manager, contractor solutions.



Underwood succeeds Don Sullivan as part of the company's leadership succession strategy. Sullivan will remain an executive vice president of CSWI and will assume the new role of chief strategy officer within the company's corporate headquarters in Dallas, Texas.

A. O. Smith receives Energy Star award

A. O. Smith announces it received a 2024 Energy Star Sustained Excellence Partner of the Year Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This is the company's sixth consecutive Energy Star Partner of the

Year award and its fourth time being selected as one of a few esteemed Sustained Excellence partners.

NIBCO promotes Christine Murphy to director of supply chain planning

NIBCO has promoted Christine Murphy to director of supply chain planning. In her new role, Murphy will be responsible for supply chain planning, vendor managed inventory demand planning, and material and vendor master data management.



Oatey announces new officers

Oatey announced some changes to its leadership team. Scott Voisinnet has been promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer. Voisinnet joined Oatey 13 years ago and has held roles with increasing responsibility in supply chain management, including director, supply chain and logistics; vice president, sourcing; and, most recently, senior vice president, supply chain. Prior to his tenure at Oatey, Voisinnet held a range of roles in supply chain, logistics and marketing at Matco Tools, Dealer Tire and General Motors. Oatey also announced the hiring of Wyatt Kilmartin as executive vice president and chief commercial officer, and will be responsible for the company's U.S. marketing and sales functions. With over 20 years' experience, he comes to Oatey from Scott Fetzer Consumer Brands, where he served as president and whose portfolio consisted of plumbing pumps, electrical fittings and outdoor power equipment service.



▲ Scott Voisinnet



▲ Wyatt Kilmartin

Nortiz names new sales partner in U.S.

Nortiz America has appointed Tipton Co. as its new sales agency for the South Central region of the United States. With this strategic partnership, Nortiz aims to strengthen its market presence and provide enhanced support to customers in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Founded in 1935 and headquartered in Conroe, Texas, Tipton is a third-generation family business with deep roots in the industry.

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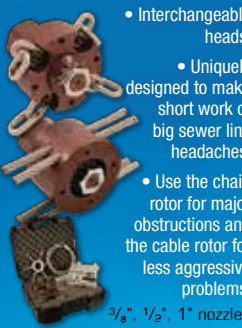
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»800 cc EFI on Manual Reel
Honda Engine
30 GALLON TANK **\$8399 Plus Freight**


NEW



4008H POWER UNIT

»8.2 gpm @ 4000 psi »400' x 3/8" Jet Hose
»800 cc EFI on DC Powered Reel
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\$12,719 Plus Freight
Just Add A Tank!


NEW



3012H POWER UNIT

»12 gpm @ 3000 psi »400' x 1/2" Jet Hose
»800 cc EFI on DC Powered Reel
Honda Engine
\$13,159 Plus Freight
Just Add A Tank!


NEW



3012H COMPACT SKID

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»800 cc EFI on DC Powered Reel
Honda Engine
(100 GALLON TANK) **\$14,579 Plus Freight**

NEW



4008H COMPACT SKID

»8.2 gpm @ 4000 psi »400' x 3/8" Jet Hose
»800 cc EFI on DC Powered Reel
Honda Engine
(100 GALLON TANK) **\$14,129 Plus Freight**

VM4008H

»8.2 gpm @ 4000 psi
»690 cc
Honda Engine
»50' x 3/8" Washdown Hose on DC Reel
\$13,399 Plus Freight

STB3012H

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»800 cc EFI
Honda Engine
»400' x 1/2" Jet Hose on DC Reel
\$22,899 Plus Freight

STB4008H

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»690 cc Honda Engine
»50' x 3/8" Washdown Hose on DC Reel
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Residential Plumbing, Water Quality and Conditioning

By Craig Mandli

System keeps boiler running efficiently

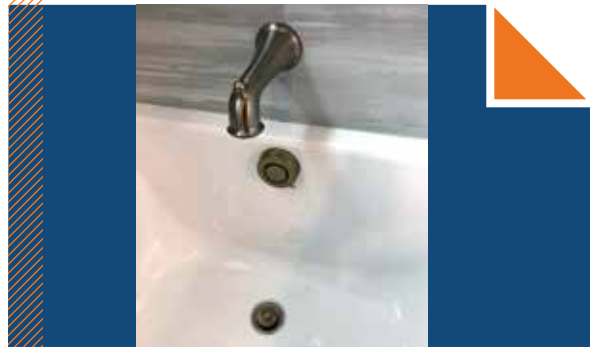


Problem: Journeyman plumber and gas fitter Jay Wynder was installing a slab heating system in Raymond, Alberta. He used an NTI FTV110c boiler tied into a 40-gallon indirect tank to provide radiant floor heating. Old, degraded piping was contributing to contaminants that were reducing the efficiency of the residential boiler system.

Solution: Wynder decided to install a **BoilerMag BM/R** in order to maximize the system's efficiency. With the ability to be installed and cleaned in minutes, it is designed to be a crucial component for protecting and increasing the longevity of any residential system. The no-block design ensures zero blockages no matter the level of filtered contamination.

Result: After two weeks flushing the system, Wynder noticed a great amount of contamination collected by the BoilerMag. Eliminating contaminants in any system is vital to maximizing its heating efficiency. **800-260-2124; www.boilermag.com**

Transforming plumbing efficiency with bath waste kits



Problem: Established in 1990 by Cary and Natalie Phillips, Commonwealth Plumbing Systems has evolved into a trusted provider of plumbing services in Richmond, Virginia. Specializing in tract-housing plumbing, Commonwealth Plumbing partners with residential builders, completing around 650 new-residential projects in 2023. Jay Loving, the purchasing manager, ensures adequate inventory for rough-in and trim-out kits, emphasizing the company's comprehensive approach to home-building services.

Solution: In May 2023, Commonwealth Plumbing made a significant switch to **Dearborn TrueBlue Bath Waste Rough-In Kits** from **Oatey** for bathtub projects. After initially using a competitor's brand, the company embraced the superior value of Dearborn kits following a meeting with Oatey sales agent Dan Dougherty. The TrueBlue kits offer integrated test features, innovative overflow gaskets and compatibility with various finishes, aligning perfectly with customers' preferences.

Result: Loving and his crew swiftly recognized the benefits of the kits. The tool-free features, depth adjustability, and quarter-turn overflow test plug contribute to time savings and enhanced convenience for installers. "The trim kits caught my attention right away," recalls Loving. "One feature that stood out was the accuracy of their finishes, which match perfectly with the Moen faucets that our customers purchase from us." **800-321-9532; www.oatey.com**

Mechanical contractor avoids long lead times on fiberglass shower pans by switching to linear shower drain systems



Problem: In Cleveland, Ohio, S.A. Comunale acted as the contractor for the new 385-unit Market District Apartments for mechanical and plumbing fixtures, with project manager and estimator Rick Schueller spearheading the work. Included in the project scope was the construction of bathroom facilities for the residential apartments and luxury penthouse suites. The construction team experienced a problem with the preformed shower pans originally used for all but 13 of the units, as some arrived damaged. Unable to get replacement shower bases in a timely manner, the construction team had to switch gears and find an alternative that would be an efficient solution to compensate for project delays and complete the 13 remaining showers.

Solution: Schueller says he had come across the QuickDrain shower system during a tour of Oatey Company's headquarters training center. Working with manufacturers representative John Yurcik of Preferred Sales, the Market District Apartments project team used the **QuickDrain USA ShowerLine** linear drain system in the master bathroom of seven apartments as well as six penthouse-suite bathrooms. In this project, the shower water was routed through 2-inch side-waste outlets. "We went with the side-waste outlets because they allowed us to place the drain wherever we wanted, and then route it back to where the pipe came up through the floor," says Schueller.

Result: S.A. Comunale's team handled the drain installation, on-site adjustable PET shower panels and waterproofing. "Installing these systems was fairly easy," says Schueller, explaining his team needed only four hours per unit. **866-998-6685; www.lrbrands.com/quickdrain**

Lift station proves to be only effective plumbing-drainage solution for floating home



Problem: Installing conventional plumbing in a floating home poses significant challenges due to its construction and the need to preserve structural integrity. AR Plumbing, a local company in Sausalito, California, faced this dilemma when tasked with plumbing renovations for a floating home at Richardson Bay. Reinforced with steel beams, the concrete foundation presented obstacles to traditional plumbing installation, prompting the search for an alternative solution.

Solution: AR Plumbing, led by owner Adeldo Rodas, turned to **Saniflo's** above-floor plumbing technology as a viable solution. After consultation with a Saniflo representative, they selected the **Sanicubic 1** grinder system for its capability to handle wastewater from multiple fixtures. This pre-assembled, compact system offers high efficiency and flexibility in piping layout, which is crucial for the confined spaces of a floating home. The Sanicubic 1's powerful motor and stainless steel cutting blade ensure reliable operation, capable of pumping effluent vertically and horizontally over significant distances.

Result: The installation of the Sanicubic 1 proved efficient, taking only two days to complete. Despite the unique challenges posed by the floating home's structure, the system performed well in tests, meeting the client's requirements for plumbing functionality. Adeldo Rodas praised Saniflo's innovative solution, emphasizing its ease of installation, compact design, and quiet operation. He expressed confidence in recommending Saniflo systems for similar applications in the future, highlighting their reliability and practicality. **800-571-8191; www.saniflo.com**

Plumber uses fittings and PEX pipe for quick leak repair



Problem: When a CPVC elbow joint failed in an East Cleveland home in 2023, the residents had a hard time finding a plumber for the leak repair because of their budget and location. But when Matthew Budaji, owner of KJM Emergency HVAC Plumbing, got the call, he was happy to take on the task. After assessing the plumbing issue, Budaji found that the CPVC elbow failed because there wasn't enough cement to hold it together, causing water to spray everywhere.

Solution: To fix the leak and meet the customer's budget, he reached for **SharkBite Max** fittings and SharkBite PEX pipe. Since KJM Emergency HVAC Plumbing always has SharkBite fittings on their trucks, Budaji quickly fixed the issue. "We were in and out faster than the drive time to get there, testing included. The residents were more than thrilled at the end results," Budaji says. To ensure there wouldn't be a callback for the same section of piping, he used SharkBite Max couplings. Compared to the company's first-generation fittings, they can withstand double the burst pressure and only take half the insertion effort to make a connection. He used the couplings to transition to PEX, which was flexible and easy to work with around obstacles and in tight spaces.

Result: Budaji had peace of mind that the SharkBite Max connection would hold up long-term for the customer. 877-700-4242; www.sharkbite.com

Racing Legend lowers home's energy bills with smart heat pump water heater



Problem: 2002 Daytona 500 winner and NASCAR legend Ward Burton needed a new high-efficiency water heater for his home in Virginia. He was seeking a water heater that could support his home's hot water needs while simultaneously lowering his family's utility bills.

Solution: Continuing their long-standing partnership, Burton worked together with **State Water Heaters** to install a **Premier AL Smart Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater** in his family's home, built in 1999. The Premier AL HPWH doesn't burn fossil fuels, but instead draws heat from the surrounding air. The unit boasts up to four times the efficiency compared to a standard electric water heater, and features whisper-quiet operation around 45 dBA. The Premier AL model also has backup heating elements for times when the Burtons need additional hot water.

Result: In the months since replacing his commercial electric water heater with the Premier AL HPWH, Burton has saved up to \$300 per month on his electric bills. Homeowners who replace a residential electric unit with a Premier AL model can expect to see savings of 75% or more on energy bills. 866-667-4960; www.statewaterheaters.com

Multi-Port drain adapter a fit for dental office



Problem: Dental offices have many water-using devices in the sterilization center. Most of these devices require a drain and space is at a premium in the base cabinet. Plumbers simply don't have enough space or connection points to the drainpipes to handle all the varied connection requirements. A plumber at working in a Midwestern dental office faced that issue.

Solution: The contractor specified and installed QAI-certified DrainDock Multi-Port Drain Adapters from Vista Water Group to solve these connection problems. Where air gaps are not required, DrainDock accepts up to eight inputs from devices like instrument washers, ultrasonic cleaners, reverse osmosis and deionization systems and autoclave wastewater lines. About the size of a grapefruit, it is available in eight-, four- and two-hole models and can be used in commercial kitchens, offices, bars and residential settings under sinks or on top of standpipes for handling drainlines from washing machines, water filters, softeners, R/O systems and condensate lines.

Result: Now there is a product for organizing drainlines and connections in base cabinets at the dental office. If there are unused ports, just add a 1/2-inch NPT plug to any open port. If a new piece of equipment requiring a drain is added later, just remove a plug, add the appropriate fitting, and make the connection in just minutes. 419-565-5702; www.vistawatergroup.com

Boiler serves large church's needs



Problem: St. Paul Catholic Church in Valparaiso, Indiana, spanning roughly 18,000 square feet with seating for 950 parishioners, sought a heating solution that not only accommodated the current space but also had the capacity for future expansions, including the installation of a storage tank hot water heater. The challenge for the Rev. Douglas Mayer of St. Paul was to balance efficiency, comfort and the unique requirements of the church, particularly regarding humidity control for three pipe organs. The primary pipe organ resides in the main church, while two antique wood organs grace a secondary chapel and choir room. The three existing boilers had reached the end of their service life and required ongoing maintenance, prompting the church to seek a high-efficiency upgrade.

Solution: Gary Jorgensen Jr. of G.L. Jorgensen Heating & Cooling recommended Weil-McLain SVF boilers, emphasizing their capacity to handle the load, improve occupancy comfort, decrease energy costs and maintain ideal humidity conditions for the delicate wood organs. The Weil-McLain SVF boiler line, ranging from 500 to 3000 mBh models, boasts thermal efficiency of up to 98%. The SVF boiler units were installed in October 2023 and set up as modulating, allowing for seamless load management and turndown capabilities. This feature is designed to adapt to varying occupancy levels, transitioning from periods when the building is unoccupied, and ramping up for church events when the chapel is full. This method is also designed to minimize wear and tear on the system, ensuring long-term performance and reliability.

Result: The project has yielded remarkable benefits thus far. Following a complete heating season, the Rev. Mayer has already begun to observe notable energy savings. "We've seen remarkable utility cost savings since implementing these Weil-McLain units, leading to substantial reductions in our energy expenses," says Mayer. "It's been truly gratifying to witness thousands of therms saved compared to previous heating seasons, reaffirming the efficiency and impact of our decision." 855-248-1777; www.weil-mclain.com

Product Spotlight

Toilets feature overflow protection system

By Craig Mandli

Most bathroom vanities are designed with holes to guard against overflow. The feature hasn't made the jump to toilet technology — until now. FGI Industries recently launched the Flush Guard anti-overflow toilet. Leveraging an effective anti-overflow drain system, Flush Guard Anti-Overflow Toilets effectively remove the fear of overflow, a feeling known as “Overflowbia,” according to Barry Jacobs, senior vice president of product development at FGI Industries.

“Our research shows that ‘Overflowbia,’ or the fear of a toilet overflow, is very real — particularly among those who have experienced it firsthand,” says Jacobs. “Flush Guard’s anti-overflow drain system represents the next major innovation in toilets. It’s one that brings with it a sense of emotional relief. With Flush Guard, consumers can literally ‘go in peace.’”

According to Jacobs, Flush Guard anti-overflow toilets feature one of the most powerful flushes on the market, making them difficult to clog in the first place. But in the unlikely event that the main drain becomes clogged, three anti-overflow holes in the bowl allow water to escape through a secondary drain. The anti-overflow drain is self-cleaning with every flush.

Flush Guard Toilets are stylish, include high-quality



components and are easy to keep clean. Both the primary and secondary drains empty into a standard waste pipe and utilize standard fittings, so there's no special installation or plumbing required, making them ideal as new construction and replacement toilets alike. When used as a replacement, a Flush Guard Toilet completely covers the area of the old toilet thanks to its large footprint. Any marks or tile discolorations are thereby hidden, elimin-

inating the need for costly surface repairs.

The Flush Guard made its industry debut at the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show in Las Vegas in March, where it was named the “Brand With the Biggest Bite” in the Design-Bites product showdown, a showcase of the latest product innovations and hottest designs in the kitchen and bath marketplace. From the thousands of brands and products at the show, 10 were chosen as finalists to pitch to a judging panel and an audience of kitchen and bath design professionals and media.

Flush Guard technology is available to consumers on Craft + Main brand toilets online and in-store through authorized distributors. The brand's Easley and Deven two-piece styles are available in traditional and elongated plus-height models, all over 1.28 gallons per flush. 888-620-3667; www.flushguardtoilets.com



Calefactio press connection water heater valve kit

Calefactio added a 3/4-inch press connection tankless water heater valve kit, including a 150 psi pressure relief valve, to its line. Compact and easy to install, each valve kit includes two isolation valves with drain and a 150 psi pressure relief valve. A valve kit with a 30 psi pressure relief valve is also available. The drains and handles are designed to simplify maintenance of the system, and are made of brass and certified lead-free to ensure lasting durability. Kits are offered with 3/4- and 1-inch NPT, press and sweat connections and include a pressure relief valve. 450-951-0818; www.calefactio.com



RectorSeal SureGrade adjustable drains

RectorSeal's SureGrade is an on-grade adjustable drain with an integral design that allows the installer to adjust the drain using three separate points. This key

design results in a seamless, level surface. SureGrade saves the installer time by not having to return to the job site to adjust and install the grate. SureGrade also has a pre-installed grate with a protective cap that resists potential damage during construction. The SureGrade cap includes a 4mm allen key that can be used to make accurate adjustments, up to 1 inch vertically, to the strainer height after the concrete pour. The drains are constructed of a 5-inch round nickel bronze grate, have a 1,500 load rating and are designed to meet ASME A112.6.3. **713-263-8001; www.rectorseal.com**



Taco Comfort Solutions water booster systems

Taco Comfort Solutions' new and improved fully integrated domestic water booster systems are ideal pressure-boosting solutions for multi-residential and commercial building applications. Each system comes with

a range of features and benefits including an integral controller in every drive, electrical mechanical disconnect and grooved pipe coupling system for easy maintenance and reconfiguration. Available in simplex, duplex, triplex or quadruplex configurations, each one is fully customizable with the easy-to-use Taco configuration software. Taco booster systems are factory-assembled, performance-tested, UL-labeled and NSF-listed. **401-942-2360; www.tacomfort.com**

NIBCO expands BenchPress product line

NIBCO continued to expand its line of patented carbon steel fittings to bring more press options for plumbing and mechanical carbon steel pipe applications as well as fuel and gas carbon steel pipe applications. BenchPress and BenchPressG fittings allow for easy, clean and fast installation of residential, commercial and industrial carbon steel piping systems. The heavy-duty fittings feature stainless steel grip rings and separator rings to ensure premium performance. The new configurations include new sizes of reducing couplings, thread adapters, tees and flanges. Available in 1/2- to 2-inch sizes, the BenchPress



and BenchPressG fittings can be installed within seconds and require no threading equipment and lubricants, while maintaining joint integrity and professional appearance. **800-234-0227; www.nibco.com**

Isuzu develops new craft beer truck

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America developed a new craft beer truck in collaboration with Summit Truck



Body. This truck was showcased during the 2024 Craft Brewers Conference in Las Vegas in April. Isuzu's Ultimate Craft Beer Truck debuted in 2019. The beer truck starts with a diesel-powered 5.2-liter I4 turbocharged engine that generates 215 hp and 452 ft-lbs of torque. Its robust B10 durability rating of 375,000 miles is evidence of the engine's long-term dependability. The Class 5 chassis provides payload for weekly deliveries and does not require a commercial drivers license to operate. The truck's low-cab-forward design provides drivers a view of the ground as little as eight feet from the front of the truck. The new tap system's insert has been redesigned to incorporate the Isuzu logo and a numbering system for the 8 Perlick 650SS taps. It is taller than previous generations to accommodate larger tap handles, and it is deeper so the drip tray can catch the overpour easier. **866-441-9638; www.isuzucv.com**

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Atlanta Build Expo, Cobb Galleria Centre (Halls C & D). Visit buildexpousa.com/atlanta-build-expo/

Aug. 7-9

Safety 2024 Professional Development Conference & Exposition, Colorado Convention Center, Denver. Visit safety.assp.org

Aug. 28-29

Los Angeles Build Expo, Los Angeles Convention Center (West Hall A). Visit buildexpousa.com/los-angeles-build-expo/

Sept. 15-17

WaterReuse California Annual Conference, Hyatt Regency Orange County, Garden Grove. Visit watereuse.org/sections/watereuse-california/2024-california-annual-conference/

Sept. 22-26

95th Annual International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials Conference, Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas. Visit iapmo.org

Sept. 24-26

WaterSmart Innovations, South Point Hotel and Conference Center, Las Vegas. Visit awwa.org/events-education/watersmart-innovations

Sept. 25-26

South Florida Build Expo, Broward County Convention Center (Hall C), Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Visit buildexpousa.com/south-florida/

Oct. 7-9

PHCC Connect 2024, Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, Birmingham, Alabama. Visit phccweb.org/connect

Oct. 15-18

Service World Expo, Disney Coronado Springs Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Visit serviceworldexpo.com

Oct. 18-23

American Society of Plumbing Engineers Convention & Expo 2024, Greater Columbus Convention Center, Ohio. Visit aspe.org

Plumber invites organizations and associations to submit details about upcoming industry trade shows and conferences for our calendar of events. editor@plumbermag.com.

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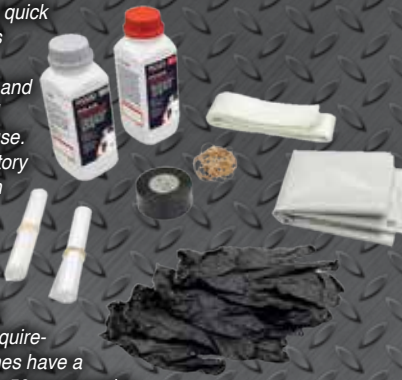


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