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Full-service contractor builds a sterling reputation by doing things differently.

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Lovett Services directional drilling operator Stephen Dahlstrom power washes the drill head from the Ditch Witch directional drill following a utility installation project. The company, based in Portland, Oregon, was founded in 1997 by Dale Lovett and Gary Cosmer and now employs 125 people and offers directional drilling, hydroexcavation, excavation and many other services throughout a 30-mile radius of Portland. (Photography by Dan Hawk)

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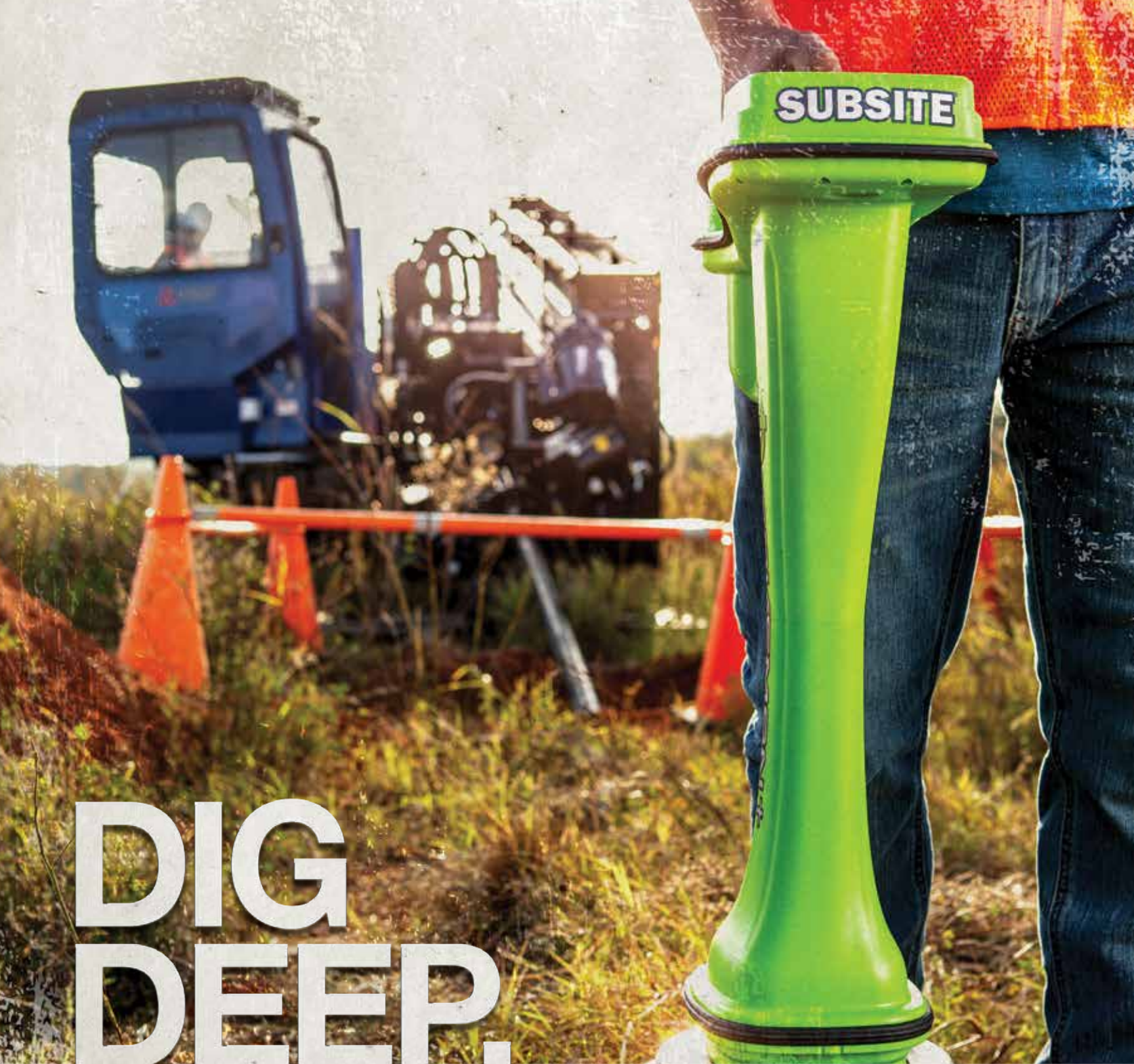
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Keep the Customers Calling

CUSTOMER SUPPORT AND TECHNOLOGY CAN COME TOGETHER TO HELP KEEP THAT PHONE RINGING WITH MORE WORK

BY CORY DELLENBACH, EDITOR

Well, here we are, already nearing the end of the first quarter of 2023. This year is flying by, and if you aren't going just as fast, you could be left behind.

Your competitors are always on the move, coming up with new services, developing new promotions, adding staff and generally trying to pull your customers away. Are you just sitting and watching it happen? Or are you doing something about it?

The team at Lovett Services — featured in this issue — is doing something about it by being a one-stop shop for all their customers. No matter what a customer might need, the company based in Portland, Oregon, will find a way to get it done.

BEING THERE NOW

A big part of Lovett Services' success is being available, 24-7. Customers can reach staff by telephone, email, online chat and social media.

We all know that potential customers will likely go to the company that they can reach first and Lovett Services is positioned to be that company.

Wouldn't you love to have that reputation? Well, you can, even without a huge staff. Here are some times to get you started:

- Offer multiple channels: Be easy to reach. Post your phone number and email everywhere; check email frequently. Make sure you're active on at least one social media platform (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).
- Invest in online chat for your website: A 2016 ATG global consumer trend study found that 90% of customers consider live chat helpful and will go to that before calling.

- Respond to feedback fast: If someone leaves you a voicemail or a Facebook message, answer as soon as possible — immediately if you can. Show customers that you care. Don't give them time to call someone else.
- Train your staff: It can be stressful to take feedback, especially since it's often negative. Equip your staff to handle complaints with ease and courtesy and to respond quickly to questions or issues. Consider a handbook with frequently asked questions. Don't skimp on training.

PUTTING IT TO WORK

Once you have that customer connection, give your crew the tools to make jobs easy and efficient — for themselves and customers.

You'll find many of the tools available in our Product Focus and The Latest: Products features in this issue. Flip through those pages and make a note of what your crews could use to help them finish those jobs quickly and accurately.

It could be as simple as a new state-of-the-art vacuum excavation trailer that makes the crews happy and the jobs go smoothly.

YOUR WORK

Speaking of jobs, I'd like to hear about the jobs you are tackling. Have you faced a challenging work site or handled a tough job? Tell me about it. Call me at 715-350-8436 or email me at editor@digdifferent.com.

Enjoy this issue! ▼

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SURPRISE OSHA AUDITS

How You Can Prepare

OSHA audits can happen at any time, and sometimes with little or no advance warning. Because you never know for sure when an inspector will show up at your place of business, it's imperative to be ready at all times. Here's how you can prepare yourself for an OSHA inspection.

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STAYING SUPPLIED

Improve Your Vendor Relations

One of the most important parts of running a company is finding a good vendor who can provide you with affordable materials, equipment and office supplies at a high level of quality. There are proactive steps companies can take to maintain positive vendor relations, and hopefully to avoid those dreaded price hikes.

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GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN

FULL-SERVICE CONTRACTOR BUILDS A STERLING REPUTATION BY DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

STORY: **KEN WYSOCKY** PHOTOS: **DAN HAWK**

From performance reviews for field workers and reading assignments for all employees to guerilla marketing tactics and an on-site bookstore to a corporate culture that emphasizes continuous learning and improvement, Lovett Services clearly is not a typical construction-services company.

Established by co-owner Dale Lovett, the Portland, Oregon business also differentiates itself through diverse service offerings that include hydroexcavation, directional drilling, conventional excavation, plumbing, drain cleaning and vacuum-truck and mitigation services, says Aaron Sawyer, corporate communications manager.

“We don’t do much at Lovett that’s the usual,” Sawyer says. “I know we operate differently than other companies because sometimes employees leave

and then come back to us because they find those other companies don’t focus on the same things we do.”

Just because Lovett Services’ employees work in the construction world doesn’t mean they don’t need the same kind of corporate culture other professionals enjoy, Sawyer says.

“We see such a high need for it,” he explains. “In the construction field, there’s usually a grab-your-shovel-and-go-to-work mentality — and don’t ask any questions. But we do things differently because that’s a recipe for disaster. All you do is create stepping stones for people to go elsewhere.”

In the end, it’s hard to argue with the results. The company generates more than \$25 million in annual revenue, employs about 100 workers, owns a large



Donovan Manchego, left, directional drilling operator at Lovett Services in Portland, operates a Ditch Witch JT20, one of the five horizontal directional drills owned by the company, while Stephen Dahlstrom mans the Ditch Witch FX60 vacuum excavator.

“IF YOU GROW A COMPANY THE WRONG WAY, YOU CAN RUIN EVERYTHING YOU’VE BEEN TRYING TO DO FROM THE START.

GROWING BY ALWAYS PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST IS THE ONLY WAY TO DO IT.”

Aaron Sawyer

Lovett Services Portland, Oregon



OWNER: Dale Lovett and Gary Cosmer

FOUNDED: 1997

EMPLOYEES: 125

SPECIALTIES: Directional drilling, hydroexcavation, excavation, plumbing, drain cleaning and vac-truck services

SERVICE AREA: 30-mile radius Portland

WEBSITE: www.lovettservices.com

fleet of equipment and caters to a wide range of customers, primarily commercial facilities, municipalities, schools and restaurants.

On any given day, Lovett Services’ crews might be exposing utility lines with hydroexcavators at hospitals and large companies; using vac trucks to clean debris from catch basins and remove fats, oils and grease from drainlines; deploying directional drills to bore pathways for new water, gas or electric lines; fixing water main breaks at plants and other facilities and performing mold prevention or water/fire mediation work.

“We’re busy,” Sawyer says. “And it’s something different every day.”

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Lovett started the company in 1997 with just an excavator, focusing primarily on residential sewer repairs. He slowly branched out into horizontal directional drilling in the early 2000s and then into drain cleaning.

A continual need for subcontractors, who often weren’t available when needed and didn’t always share the same values and standards for quality, drove Lovett’s diversification efforts. Plus it just made sense to keep adding bolt-on services that meshed well, Sawyer says.

“The beauty of our business is that all the services complement each other,” he explains. “If you need a plumber, you might also need a drain cleaner. Or an excavation job or plumbing call might reveal a need to have a new service line drilled.

“All of our services flow together and produce a seamless one-stop shop for customers.”

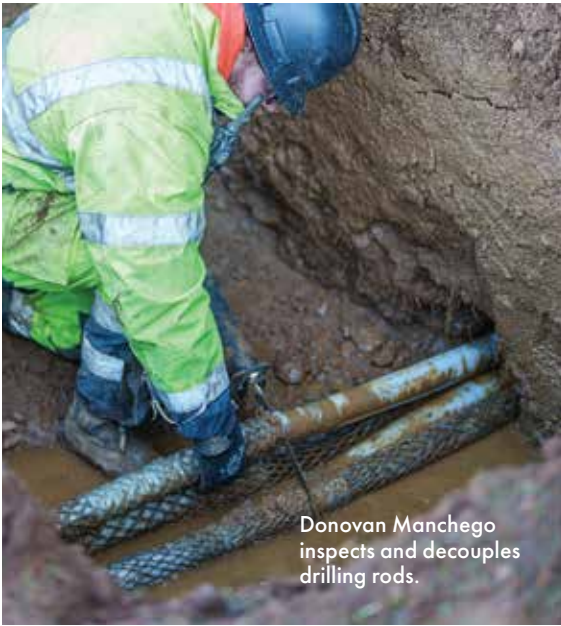
Most of the jobs crews perform tend to be smaller in nature. But as Sawyer notes, they add up in a hurry.

“There’s something to be said for drilling thousands of feet of lines at a time, but smaller projects tend to be more consistently available,” he says.

The company’s growth was kick-started around 2018 by the arrival of a new co-owner, Gary Cosmer (now the firm’s chief executive officer), who came from the private-equity industry and worked on many merger-and-acquisition projects. He also brought with him a focus on operating efficiency, based on a Japanese philosophy called kata that emphasizes continuous learning and improvement.

Aided by Cosmer’s fresh business approach, Lovett Services also expanded its market offerings as well as its geographic footprint by acquiring Synergy Restoration & Construction in Portland in 2020 and Kruse Plumbing in Vancouver, Washington, in 2021.

“Those acquisitions fit into our strategy of buying companies that mesh well with services we already provide,” Sawyer says, noting that Kruse does new-construction plumbing, a service Lovett didn’t provide before. “We knew we couldn’t grow as much with just Lovett Services. We had to grow our portfolio of services.”



Donovan Manchego inspects and decouples drilling rods.



The team at Lovett Services includes, from left, Aaron Sawyer, corporate communications manager; Donovan Manchego, directional drilling operator; Ivan Memmer, field safety coordinator; Stephen Dahlstrom, directional drilling operator; Tylo Hartford, directional drilling foreman; and Brandon Myrick, directional drilling operator.



“ALL OF OUR SERVICES FLOW TOGETHER AND PRODUCE A SEAMLESS ONE-STOP SHOP FOR CUSTOMERS.”

Aaron Sawyer

Aaron Sawyer, right, corporate communications manager, and Tylo Hartford work out details on a job site.

INVESTMENTS IN EQUIPMENT

As the company’s services expanded, so did its fleet of machines and equipment, primarily purchased from Papé Machinery. For industrial and municipal work, including hydroexcavation, the company relies on four Vac-All combination sewer vacuum trucks that feature Kenworth and Freightliner chassis, 30,000-gallon debris tanks, 1,500-gallon water tanks and Vac-All blowers.

The company also owns five horizontal directional drills manufactured by Ditch Witch (a brand owned by The Toro Company), ranging from JT5s

(4,100 pounds of thrust force, 5,000 pounds of pullback force and up to 550 foot pounds of spindle torque) to JT20s (17,000 pounds of thrust force, 20,000 pounds of pullback force and up to 2,200 foot pounds of spindle torque).

In addition, the company has invested in a CCTV camera truck outfitted with an inspection camera system manufactured by CUES; eight Yanmar and John Deere excavators; and four custom water-jetter trucks outfitted with jettors made by US Jetting and Harben (a subsidiary of Flowplant Group Ltd.) The units feature 100-gallon water tanks and water pumps that generate pressure of 4,000 psi and flow of up to 25 gpm.

The company also depends heavily on ServiceTitan, a business management software platform designed specifically for the trades. It offers a wide range of capabilities, from dispatching and scheduling to handling invoicing, customer payments, payroll, job costing, financial reporting and more.

“It’s one of the best investments Lovett ever made,” Sawyer says. “It’s a very robust business management platform.”

MASTERING PROCESSES

The Japanese concept of kata, which has its roots in martial arts and means “way of doing,” informs all aspects of the company’s operations. In simplest terms, kata is a structured way of mastering processes by doing things deliberately and repetitively, with an ultimate goal of continuous improvement and innovation.

On a job site, for example, that might mean ensuring that everything needed for a job is ready to go and in the same spot every time, Sawyer says.

“It’s really been a real game-changer,” he says, noting that Toyota Motor Corp. is one of the more well-known adopters of the concept. “Our whole way of doing things changed by embracing the Toyota system. Once you get into it, things start working differently at your company.”

One central plank of a kata mindset is educating and empowering individual employees to suggest improvements that can improve efficiency.

“It’s about managing people for improvement — empowering them to pull a red flag and stop work when they see something wrong or that can be done better,” he says.

The company’s emphasis on self-improvements meshes well with the Toyota principles. For example, all employees are required to read a book titled *The 13 Behaviours of High Trust* published by FranklinCovey, a leadership-training company. Another book recommended for employees is *How Full Is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Don Clifton, Sawyer says.

STRIVING FOR IMPROVEMENT

To bolster the self-improvement efforts, the company offers a bookstore that focuses on self-improvement books that employees can take home to read.

(continued)

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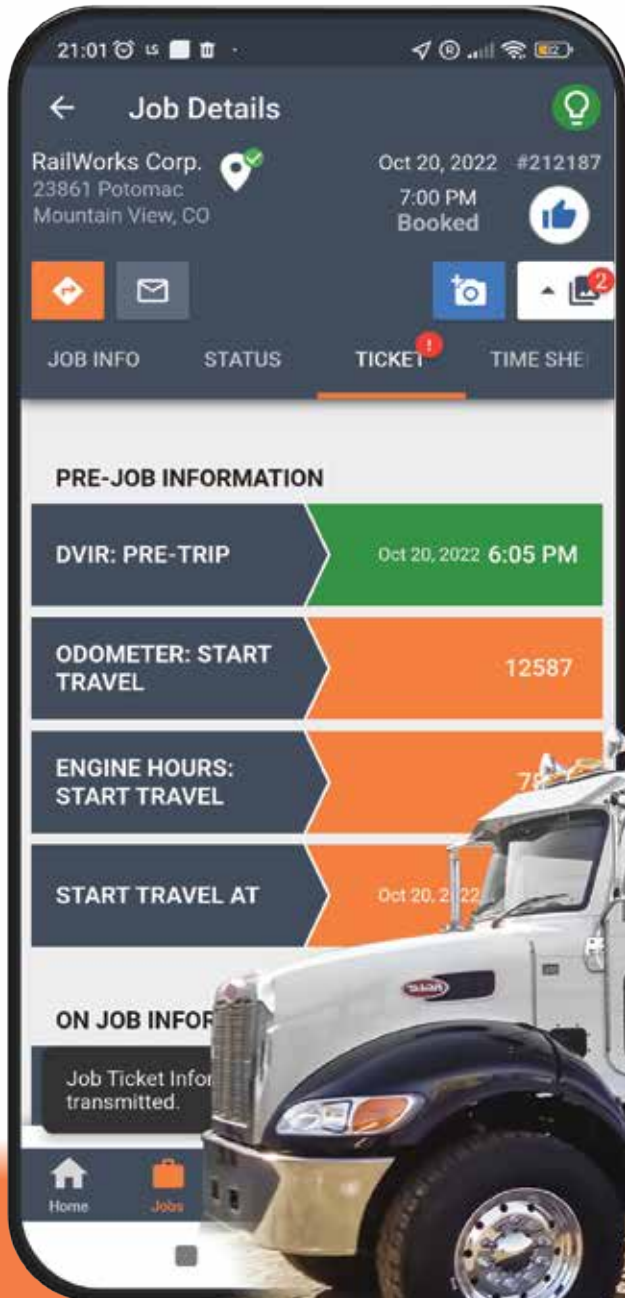
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Or they can buy books the bookstore doesn't have and get reimbursed for the cost. There's also a fully equipped gym for employees to use because physical well-being is important, too, Sawyer says.

"We also pay for professional development training," he adds. "For instance, our salespeople often receive blueprints for projects to develop estimates, but don't know how to read them. So we're sending them out to learn how to read blueprints.

"It's these kinds of things that keep us ahead of the game."

Sawyer concedes the company's zen-like culture isn't for everyone — but that's okay, he notes.

"You either grow in it or find it's too much and leave," Sawyer says. "We let those employees go with grace and rehire them with grace if they come back.

"But developing this kind of culture pays dividends for us," he continues. "If employees are happy with themselves and at home, they're going to perform better at work.

"When I was first hired, it was pretty obvious to me that adopting Toyota's kata philosophy was not going to be easy," Sawyer adds. "I had to forget a lot of what I learned in the industry and understand there are better ways to do things."

JOB REVIEWS FOR ALL

All employees also receive annual performance reviews as well as peer-to-peer reviews, another nod to the company's emphasis on continuous improvement.

Effective performance reviews are especially important right now with the tight labor market. Why? Because it's much easier to give employees feedback that can improve their performance than to eventually fire them and then have to look for new employees and invest considerable time in training them, Sawyer says.

"Sometimes someone's job performance just needs a little bit of tweaking, so we want to help them understand what they need to do their job better and more efficiently," he says.

In other instances, managers may determine that an employee needs a job change in order to keep improving, Sawyer says.

"Not everyone wants to do the same thing all the time," he says. "Sometimes you want to hit a different key on the keyboard. We're always looking to move people toward what's best for them to grow, which in turn helps Lovett grow."

AMBITIOUS REVENUE GOAL

Looking ahead, the company has set an ambitious revenue goal: \$100 million in sales within the next 10 years. To achieve that, the company expects to acquire more companies that can expand the company's geographic footprint as well as bolster existing services or add complementary new services, Sawyer says.

The only growth inhibitor on the horizon is the tight labor market, because the company's existing workforce can't take on much more work. If it tries to do more work than it can handle, it would jeopardize work quality and customer service, he notes.

Contractor's Unconventional Marketing Efforts Aim to Create 'Zombie Loyalists'

Many construction-services companies rely on word-of-mouth referrals as their primary marketing tool.

While there's no doubt this is one of the most valuable and cost-effective forms of advertising, Lovett Services — a company that prides itself on doing things differently — takes a much wider, as well as unorthodox, view of marketing.

"Word-of-mouth referrals might be the No. 1 way to reach potential customers, but there's also a No. 2 method, a No. 3, a No. 4 a No. 5 and so on," says Aaron Sawyer, the company's corporate communications manager.

"We're one of the largest marketers in our industry and one of most well-branded companies in Oregon," he continues. "For all we know, some people might think we're a company that makes snowboards. But that's okay — we just want our name out there."

Sure, the Portland-based company depends on conventional marketing methods such as working with state and regional trade organizations to sponsor events ranging from symposiums and networking events to golf outings and fishing trips, he notes.

But the company veers sharply from the norm by also embracing consumer marketing to create what Sawyer calls "zombie loyalists," aka extremely rabid fans. For example, Lovett Services gives away 5,000 to 10,000 pieces of Lovett-branded merchandise annually to everyday consumers through social media contests — everything from stickers and hats to hooded sweatshirts and Yeti cups, he says.

"We achieve organic growth from people who know about our brand but would probably never use our services," Sawyer explains. "It's worth the effort because anyone who can spread our message is great.

"You never know when one of our fans is talking to someone who mentions that they have, say, a plumbing or drain emergency," he adds. "You just never know where a job reference is going to come from."

The company also does radio and television advertising — even over-the-top advertising on digital streaming platforms.

That may seem like a very counter-intuitive approach for a construction-services company. But Sawyer notes that you never know who might be watching streaming television programs.

"A guy who runs a utility or a large facility might be watching," he says. "We're always interested in trying the next new thing to stay top-of-mind with consumers."

The company's focus on continual improvement and learning for employees also bolsters marketing efforts. As evidence, Sawyer points to the company's five-star average out of 246 Google reviews.

"That's hard to get in this industry," he notes. "It takes a lot of work — a culture of people that are working to get five-star reviews."

The company's logo, emblazoned on every service vehicle and machines, also plays a big role in branding.

"Most people I meet know who Lovett is," he says. "We're very good at getting the word out."

"When you no longer finish projects on time, for example, you're doing C-grade work and start getting two- or three-star online reviews," Sawyer says. "And we're not a two- or three-star service company.

"If you grow a company the wrong way, you can ruin everything you've been trying to do from the start," Sawyer continues. "Growing by always putting customers first is the only way to do it."

Is \$100 million in revenue a doable goal?

"We're very confident that we'll hit it," Sawyer says. "We have the right team in place to achieve that kind of growth. Yes, there are challenges down the road, but we have a system in place to handle those challenges and turn them into opportunities." ▼

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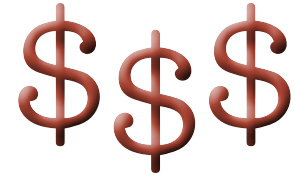
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Explore SBA-Backed Loans When You Need Cash



THE FEDERAL SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DOESN'T HAND OUT MONEY, BUT IT BACKS LOANS THAT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW

BY AMI KASSAR

Where does a utility contractor turn when he or she needs an infusion of cash to buy a new piece of equipment, launch a new service offering or build a new shop? The first stop for funding toward a new vacuum excavator or directional drill might be the friendly hometown banker who knows you and your business. Or you might approach that well-heeled uncle to invest in your business to help you take that next step.

If you exhaust those two options, consider going to the Small Business Administration, a federal agency that doesn't operate as a bank but acts as a valuable conduit to lenders predisposed to work with businesses like yours.

You might think the SBA is a big, bureaucratic behemoth that would be difficult to tap into for financial assistance. But that is just one of the misconceptions people have about the government agency, which has been around since 1953 and generally receives good reviews from the businesses it assists.

Let's talk about three of the biggest myths surrounding the SBA. You may have heard:

THE SBA LENDS MONEY

Although the SBA can directly lend money in cases of disaster, that's not its main role when it comes to lending. Instead, it serves as a government guarantee program for banks and nonbanks.

That means it essentially serves as a backup to lenders who might otherwise not be interested in making loans to smaller and/or unproven businesses. It offers guarantees up to 85% for loans up to \$150,000 and 75% for loans bigger than that. Because lenders working with the SBA are less likely to endure the full brunt of defaults, they're more likely to make loans to unproven businesses.

The SBA does set requirements and application process details. Applications will require personal background information, a business plan, personal and business credit reports, income tax returns, bank statements and a resumé, among other things. It's also possible personal or business collateral is required.

One benefit for the borrower is that loan terms tend to be longer (up to 10 years) and require smaller monthly repayments due to favorable interest rates.

THE SBA IS ONLY FOR MOM AND POP SHOPS

Mom-and-pop shops are among the kinds of businesses the SBA is looking to help, but they can also work with much larger businesses. Through its flagship 7(a) program, SBA-backed loans can be as large as \$5 million for needs such as working capital. And through its lesser-known 504(b) program, as much as \$12.8 million can be obtained for businesses seeking to buy real estate or major equipment.

A \$5 million or \$12.8 million loan is way above what most small businesses need. While there's no one-size-fits-all template for a typical SBA loan customer, most are businesses that are going to have anywhere between \$50,000 and \$5 million in annual revenues and up to 40 employees, which fits the scope

of many companies in the alternative excavation industry. Those businesses are likely to be cash flow positive and profitable.

Of course, if mom-and-pop shops need a loan, small amounts are available, too. There are no minimum guaranty amounts for any SBA loan program.

MY BANKER DIDN'T TELL ME ABOUT SBA-BACKED LOANS OR SAID I'M NOT QUALIFIED, SO I'M OUT

Not to fear: You're most likely not "out." About 2,200 banks and other lenders throughout the U.S. write SBA-backed loans. Each one uses the program differently and requires varying qualifications.

So even if one lender rejects you, it doesn't mean that all will. It's always worth trying another lender (or two or three) if you get rejected — advice that applies when seeking non-SBA loans as well. If you go to a doctor and don't like what he or she says, you may get a second opinion; so why not do the same here?

In addition, there may be other reasons why your go-to lenders may not tell you about SBA loans. Perhaps they're ignorant about the program. Or maybe their employer doesn't give them incentives that make them want to push SBA loans; remember, your banker is trying to make a living, too, and might push you toward more profitable options for his or her own pockets.

It might even be something as simple as your banker doesn't want to go through the necessary paperwork. Lining up an SBA loan usually does require

BECAUSE LENDERS WORKING WITH THE SBA ARE LESS LIKELY TO ENDURE THE FULL BRUNT OF DEFAULTS, THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE LOANS TO UNPROVEN BUSINESSES.

more documentation than a regular loan. And large banks often aren't interested in making small loans, which can be less profitable and riskier than larger loans.

So, if you get rejected for an SBA loan by a large bank, try a smaller bank, which may well specialize in the program and have lenders who are well versed in the process.

UNDER FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Hopefully this clears up some of the misconceptions about the SBA and its lending programs. These programs work, as many business owners will attest, and there's no downside in at least considering an SBA loan the next time you need funding. Its website, www.sba.gov, is helpful as well, providing further information in an easy-to-use format.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ami Kassar is chief executive officer of MultiFunding LLC, a speaker and the author of *The Growth Dilemma*. For more information, visit www.amikassar.com.



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Overcoming Service Fatigue

EVEN IF YOU TRY TO HIDE IT FROM CUSTOMERS, SERVICE FATIGUE LEFT UNCHECKED CAN NEGATIVELY AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS

BY LAURIE GUEST

Does it feel like no matter how hard you try to please your customers, it isn't enough? Are you in charge of leading others and the faster you train teams and build energy, the quicker it seems to fade? Are you a business owner feeling hopeless about the never-ending needs of staff and customers while trying to achieve a profitable bottom line? You're exhausted, right?

This exhaustion is what's called service fatigue, defined as that feeling that keeps you from delivering the excellent customer service your staff and clients have come to expect. Left unchecked, this weariness can impact your business in many negative ways, from short tempers to lost business.

Let's unpack the what, where, why, and how of service fatigue and get on the path to busting out of it.

WHAT DOES SERVICE FATIGUE LOOK LIKE?

You know what customer service should look like. Attentive. Proactive. Genuine. Service fatigue is "less than," and it presents in many forms. It's when your customer experience is less than you — or they — expect. It's a lack of energy, elevated stress, constant ambivalence, difficulty concentrating, missed deadlines, frequent mistakes or safety compliance issues.

The trickiest kind of service fatigue to spot is the kind the team thinks they can hide from customers. It's still there, lurking beneath the surface, threatening to bring everyone down in its undertow.

WHERE DOES SERVICE FATIGUE COME FROM?

After a stressful few years, various challenges have caused service fatigue levels to skyrocket. But the truth is, service fatigue can strike at any time, and much of it is really nothing new. It's short-tempered customers who escalate to anger quickly. It's trying (and usually failing) to juggle multiple priorities at a time. It's navigating ever-changing business policies. It's responsibilities that outnumber hours in the day. It's one bad attitude draining a team's morale. Service fatigue can come from anywhere, and knowing how to identify it is half the battle.

WE ALL CAN AND SHOULD GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO DELIVER CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE. BUT WHEN YOU'RE DOING FAR MORE THAN IS EXPECTED, YOU MAY BE BRINGING SERVICE FATIGUE ON YOURSELF.

WHY DOES SERVICE FATIGUE MATTER?

The short answer: It matters because it impacts your bottom line. When service fatigue takes over at your business, everything is at risk.

You can play a huge part in lessening that burden for your team and your customers. If it's possible, make work a welcoming, encouraging environment for your staff so they can give your customers a reason to crow about the great experience they had. By recognizing service fatigue and equipping your team with the tools to bust out of its grip before it's too late, you'll ensure that everyone's experience is that much better.

HOW DO WE MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF SERVICE FATIGUE?

There are countless ways to bust out of service fatigue, and no two businesses will adopt exactly the same solution. Decades of experience in the customer



Laurie Guest

service industry prove that there's no silver bullet to finally overcoming exhaustion. Rather, it takes a combination of strategy, patience and commitment to bolster your team and get them back on track to deliver the kind of remarkable customer service you and your customers expect.

Here are a couple strategies for busting out of service fatigue:

Build better boundaries

Professional boundaries can be the single best tool to help with service fatigue, whether you need to put them in place with your boss or you need to ensure your team knows that work/life separation is a good thing. Unless it's imperative, do you really need to reply to emails at 8 p.m.? Is that gap or hiccup in a process at work really yours to lose sleep over?

We all can and should go above and beyond to deliver customer service excellence. But when you're doing far more than is expected, you may be bringing service fatigue on yourself. Be honest: Are you guilty of your own boundary breakdowns? Are there honest conversations you can have to get those boundaries — and your energy levels — back on track?

Re-evaluate your boundaries today and find where you can firm them up. You'll soon see what a difference they make in boosting your energy and positive attitude.

Grant yourself rest

While some have mastered the art of taking breaks, others tend to do things fast — and often multitask. We like the concept of rest, but the demands on our time often get in the way of our ability to truly take a break.

There are as many as seven types of rest, from physical and emotional to creative and spiritual. The truth is, they're all important, and giving ourselves the space to breathe when things get stressful is imperative. Rest can mean putting down your phone an hour early and reading a book instead, or using a work break to do a brief silent meditation.

When we prioritize rest and start to see it as doing good for ourselves, we are more energized to deliver customer service excellence.

WHEN DO I NEED TO ADDRESS SERVICE FATIGUE?

No surprises here: If you recognize the signs of service fatigue, now is the time to bust out of it.

Start by identifying what's causing the fatigue, then set aside time to plan for change, including both big and small steps to reinvigorate your team and return to delivering customer service excellence. When you commit to the change, the hardest part is already over. All it takes from there is digging in to bust out of service fatigue once and for all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keynote speaker and author Laurie Guest is an authority on customer service excellence. She blends real-life examples and proven action steps for improvement. She is the author of two books and is writing a third on the topic of service fatigue. To learn more or connect with Guest, visit www.laurieguest.com.

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Air Excavation Equipment

RAMVAC Vacuum Excavators by Sewer Equipment Tempest

The Tempest industrial air mover from RAMVAC Vacuum Excavators by Sewer Equipment is capable of removing dry and liquid materials over a long distance and from great depths. This unit delivers maximum vacuum efficiency even in the toughest working conditions. While utilizing high suction from a 28 inches Hg 5,500 cfm positive displacement blower through an 8-inch system, this unit offers a self-discharging filter system that provides automatic interval cleaning of the filter house during vacuum operations. This system significantly reduces the downtime associated with premature cleaning of the baghouse when the debris box is not full. It allows operators to keep working while recognizing maximum debris capacity. Additionally, its hydraulically powered articulating extendable knuckleboom is exclusive in the marketplace. With 270-degree range of motion and 16 foot working length, this boom hinges back and forth, providing maximum support of the vacuum tube for increased operator ergonomics as well as cleaning efficiency.

888-477-7638; www.sewerequipment.com



Drills

Vermeer Ultra X3 Drilling System

The Vermeer Ultra X3 Drilling System for utility-sized rigs is designed with a nontorqued spline connection system, and it offers compatibility with a wide range of pilot bit and pull-back configurations. The system delivers value and efficiency with its ability to swap out tooling quickly with two knock-out dowel pins, the capability of reaming directly from the transmitter housing, and the elimination of starter rods and adapters in certain applications. It is available in Ultra X3 375 for HDDs in the 40,000-pound drill range, Ultra X3 325 for HDDs in the 24,000-pound drill range and Ultra X3 275 for HDDs in the 10,000-pound drill range.

352-728-2222; www.vermeer.com



Horizontal Directional Drilling

Ditch Witch AT120

Built to boost job site uptime, the AT120 from Ditch Witch gives underground construction operators the power and stability needed to push through rock and tough ground conditions, streamlining fiber, pipeline and utility installation projects. As the largest AT drill in the world, it improves job site efficiency for previous mid- and maxi-size drill owners, as it uses less drilling fluid, resulting in decreased job site waste, minimized cleanup and reduced environmental impact. It features 15,500 foot-pounds of rotational torque and 3,000 foot-pounds of inner rotational torque. With 120,000 pounds of thrust and pullback, it allows operators to take on a wide variety of projects as well as move through longer bores and larger diameter installations more efficiently. Equipped with a 20-foot end-to-end drill pipe on board, it helps operators put more pipe in the ground, further boosting job site uptime. It offers a saver lock design to protect the drill pipe and drive system against wear and tear.

580-336-4402; www.ditchwitch.com



Hydroexcavation Equipment

Dynablast HV590FLS-12VRED

The HV590FLS-12VRED hydrovac water heater from Dynablast produces 590,000 Btus with an output temperature of 175 degrees F at 7 gpm. An optional electronic 12-volt thermostat can hold more precise water temperature. The unit is suitable for colder climates and improves digging in clay-filled areas. It enables fuel savings of 3/4 gph and weight reduction of 250 pounds over the current 690,000 Btu model. It comes with ETL certification for safety, which also includes certification on the coil for higher efficiency and heat transfer, stainless steel target plate for increased coil life and serviceability with momentary override control.

905-867-4642; www.dynablast.ca



Easy-Kleen Pressure Systems Wildcat Heaters

Wildcat Heaters high-pressure, oil-fired hot-water/steam heaters and hydraulic pump systems from Easy-Kleen Pressure Systems are designed for reliability and efficiency, and are installation-ready for vacuum trucks and hydroexcavators. A full range of heater options includes dry steam, redundancy packages, schedule 80 and 160 stainless steel or A53 boiler pipe, and fine-tuned temperature and flow-control systems. All coils are manufactured in-house, with CRN boiler-approved coils now available. Heaters can be designed for mounting in a cabinet or supplied as a completed cabinet unit. They are CSA and ETL approved. Hydraulic pumping systems are available.

800-315-5533; www.easykleen.com



Enz USA Hydro X

The Hydro X nozzle from Enz USA is available in 3/8-inch NPT or 1/2-inch connecting threads, and it can function at up to 5,000 psi with flow as low as 8 gpm. It combines a powerful, oscillating water jet with a high debris removal rate. A tungsten carbide front jet ensures a longer life than ceramic jets can offer. For quick and easy maintenance, a repair kit is available. Due to the nozzle's simplicity, repairs can be made quickly and efficiently in the field with little downtime. For the operator's safety, a plastic cover provides protection against harsh and sensitive environments.

888-369-8721; www.enz.com



GapVax VHX Series

The GapVax VHX Series hydrovac is designed to deliver optimum weight distribution, improved safety features and increased performance. The debris body is 7.5 cubic yards, offering a 15,000-pound payload. The low-profile (12 feet 2 inches) makes it suitable for all-around hydroexcavation projects. The vacuum system with single mode wet/dry filtration is quiet, reliable and simple, according to the maker. It includes a 4,000 cfm positive displacement blower, 600 hp transfer case with air-shift engagement and ultra-quiet air injection and discharge silencers. This filtration design includes a top-loading debris tank, 14-inch stainless steel float-ball shut-off, efficient centrifugal cyclone separators and long-lasting filter bags. It is equipped with a 12 gpm, 3,000 psi water system with optional 200 cfm air compressor system. A full-tilting debris body, over 45-degree dump angle and full-opening tailgate allow for fast unloading and easy cleanout. The 8-inch telescoping VHX boom offers a 22-foot reach with 15-degree downward pivot.

888-442-7829; www.gapvax.com



Hi-Vac X-13 Hydro Excavator

The Hi-Vac X-13 Hydro Excavator was created to maximize productivity and return on investment and minimize downtime by eliminating high-maintenance components. A modular design provides clean and intuitive controls and simple, planned maintenance accessibility for all critical systems. It is ideal when on-site dumping is required and for off-highway applications that require the maximum legal payload. A 13-cubic yard debris tank, up to 24,500-pound payload capacity and 1,140-gallon fresh-water capacity result in fewer costly job site trips. Power is provided by a 5,800 cfm 27-inch Hg high-performance blower and a run-dry water pump that delivers 20 gpm at 2,500 psi. The top-mounted, 360-degree boom ensures accessibility in all directions and a heavy-duty, hydraulic vibrator facilitates fast and efficient unloading of the debris body. A severe-duty boiler safely heats water for frozen ground applications.

800-752-2400; www.x-vac.com



HotJet USA Vac 'n Jet Series

The HotJet USA Vac 'n Jet Series of vacuum trailer jettors are rugged and compact, engineered to haul equipment and spoils loads, can clean valve boxes and storm drains and hydroexcavate and/or clean drainlines and sewer lines. They offer hot- and/or cold-water operation with a choice of engines ranging from 13 to 66 hp and gas or diesel. They are equipped with premium triplex pumps, a 500-gallon spoils tank, 200-gallon water tank, Gardner Denver vac/blowers, 4-ton hydraulic dump and CentriClean filter system. They can also be designed to meet specifications.

800-624-8186; www.hotjetusa.com



Pressure Lift HydraBore

The HydraBore from Pressure Lift can blast down and physically remove built up tallow, soap residue and tank waste. Best used with a jetter, it will only add roughly 16 gallons of high-pressure water in a 10-minute period. Total time on a job, with a unit pumping approximately 2,000 gallons of waste, is less than 20 minutes at depths of 5 to 500 feet. It also minimizes the amount of cleanup simply because the water jets are directed towards the area to be excavated. It only requires one person to operate the boom, as the unit automatically directs the water where it's needed for the project because it is connected to the pump boom.

866-504-6596; www.pressurelift.com



Rival Hydrovac T7 Tandem and T10

The T7 Tandem from Rival Hydrovac was designed primarily to be a unit that could be loaded with debris and drive within legislated road limits with most types of debris on board. The unit comes standard with a scale that reads real-time weights both in the cab and on the wireless remote to confirm weight prior to travel. The T10 is built with the same features and operating system, but with larger capacities and components. It is popular with clients who do both utility and industrial work. It is available in three chassis layouts to meet weight restrictions in a given area. An air compressor option allows for excavating with air when required while a truck-mounted coring system allows for removal of hard surfaces prior to nondestructive excavating.

403-550-7997; www.rivalhydrovac.com



Soil Surgeon hydroexcavating tool

The Soil Surgeon hydroexcavating tool fits any sewer combination truck equipped with a telescoping 6- or 8-inch boom. The tool has a 1-inch water connection. The operator controls water pressure and power through truck controls. It has a 6-foot Tuff-Tube with handles to guide the unit down for potholing or side to side for trenching. Six jets boring inward cut the soil while six boring outward bring the tube down.

949-363-1401; www.soilsurgeoninc.com



Super Products Mud Dog 700

Mud Dog 700 vacuum excavators from Super Products are designed for operator convenience and consistent performance to meet the challenges of compact, urban projects to large-scale excavation. Regardless of the task, the vacuum excavators offer versatility as well as safety and productivity on the job site, according to the maker. They offer a compact footprint for excavation in urban environments while maximizing payload and are designed to maintain the power and precision of larger units. The unit features a 7-yard debris body and 600-gallon water tank. This model comes standard as a dump body with an electric vibrator offering a 50-degree dump angle with the capability of dumping into a 48-inch container. It is equipped with a rear-mounted, extendable, 8-inch-diameter boom that reaches 18 feet, has 270-degree rotation and pivots 10 degrees downward to minimize job site restoration and traffic congestion near roads.

800-837-9711; www.superproducts.com



Tornado Global Hydrovacs F3 ECO-LITE

Tornado Global Hydrovacs engineered the F3 ECO-LITE to have big functionality in a mid-sized platform. It was made specifically to legally haul large payloads in urban environments with a debris capacity of 10 cubic yards and a water capacity of 1,250 gallons. A float-style indicator is positioned on the outside of the debris tank for easy monitoring of volume. It comes with a boom capable of reaching to 26 feet with 342 degrees of rotation and an 8-inch boom hose. The truck uses a 3,800 cfm Robuschi 125 blower, a Pratisoli KT28 water pump and a Dynablast 740,000 Btu burner. A hydraulic dump door measuring 48 by 52 inches is mounted on the back of the tank and sits 42 inches high for easy use over bins.

877-340-8141; www.tornadotrucks.com



TRUVAC TRXX

The TRUVAC TRXX vacuum excavation trailer is easy to learn, operate and maintain. It delivers the power and features required to perform a wide range of safe digging applications including underground utility locating, keyholing for HDD installations, slot trenching, and removal of non-hazardous liquids including flood water, drilling spoils, and catch basins. It brings safe digging to a new range of applications to benefit municipalities and landscaping and plumbing contractors, when job locations are tight on space, or less than what would require a full-size truck. Available in 500 and 800 gallons, both offer optional cyclone filtration. A standard wireless multi-function remote control activates all dig, vacuum, and dump functions, including the "Dig and Unclog" feature to streamline the operator's workflow. An optional strong arm or hydraulic boom extends the reach even further.

800-627-3171; www.truvac.com



(continued)

Vac-Con Mudslinger MS800

The Mudslinger MS800 trailer-mounted hydrovac from Vac-Con is designed to provide the same power, suction and capacity of a truck hydroexcavator on a portable, pull-behind trailer. It includes the choice of Tier 4 diesel or gas engine options providing up to 1,190 cfm and 16 inches Hg with a PD blower and 325 gallons of water. It has an 845-gallon debris tank and a 9-foot boom with 24 inches of hydraulic extension provides a full range of motion. It is designed to be a standalone unit, but can also provide support to construction, HDD and public utility fleets. A variety of applications includes daylighting, potholing, culvert and manhole cleaning and utility locating.



800-284-4200; www.vac-con.com

Vacall AllExcavate and AllExcavate2

Standard intelligent controls, easy startup and operation set Vacall AllExcavate and AllExcavate2 machines apart. Both models efficiently remove dirt around utility lines and foundations. Water pumps generate 24.5 to 120 gpm and pressures to 3,000 psi. The AE2 model adds air excavation at 185 cfm and dual psi of 110 and 150. Water system, wand, control panel, tools and worker apparel are protected in a heated compartment. An AllSmartFlow CAN bus intelligent control system features a programmable LCD display that monitors engine, water-flow, air pressure, and vacuum performance for precise boom and reel adjustments. Aluminum water tanks with lifetime warranty carry 1,000 to 1,300 gallons. Galvanized debris tanks have a supreme finish, and are available with 8-, 10- and 13-cubic-yard capacities. They use one engine to power the chassis and excavation functions, reducing service and operation costs.



800-382-8302; www.vacall.com

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800-373-2478, www.agruamerica.com

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HammerHead Trenchless HydraSlitter kits are designed to help industry professionals meet the 10-year U.S. goal of replacing all lead pipe service laterals. The system provides a minimally invasive, low-cost, effective alternative to opencut replacement of lead potable water pipe 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter. Select from two full-system kits now available online. Kits once ordered arrive within a few days containing all tooling and accessories the contractor needs for that specific job. Contents include the appropriate slitter, blades, expanders, cable, duct-rodder and cable grip for the excavator, as well as a tooling assembly selection chart and instructions.



800-331-6653; www.hammerheadtrenchless.com

Pow-R Mole Trenchless Solutions PD-33M

The PD-33M pipe bursting machine from Pow-R Mole Trenchless Solutions is designed to replace existing underground pipes 2 to 6 inches in diameter. Its nonslip, cylinder-activated jaws prevent cable damage while providing 60,000 pounds of pulling force. It offers a cost-effective alternative to opencut excavation, reducing customer disruption and increasing company profits. The process replaces the existing pipe with a fused HDPE pipe, which eliminates all joints and allows the operator to pull through bends such as 45-degree fittings. This system is modular and can be easily disassembled and reassembled for manhole and basement applications. With a compact design and very small footprint of only 20 by 20 inches, this unit can be used in tight locations.



800-344-6653; www.powrmole.com

Rock Drills/Saws

Infinity Tool Rock Boss Extreme

The Rock Boss Extreme from Infinity Tool is designed specifically for HDD rock drilling and is one of the most steerable PDC rock bits on the market. This design is also manufactured with back-out cutters throughout its entire range. It is available in 5-, 5 1/2-, 6 1/4-, 6 1/2-, and 6 3/4-inch diameter rock bits. All bits are manufactured to international quality standards.



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4

1. All new Brandt HX120 hydroexcavator

The all-new Brandt HX120 hydroexcavator is a high-output unit with a 1,150-gallon water tank and 11.6-cubic-yard debris tank. Nimble enough for urban settings, the HX120 helps contractors work more efficiently with maximized legal load weights, quicker debris loading and unloading time, and the capacity to take on larger jobs without load weight concerns. Real-time measurement of water and overall truck weight enables operators to make quick, informed decisions, which reduces the risk of damage or overweight penalties. The new unit features a 28-foot boom reach with 340-degree rotation. **866-427-2638; www.brandt.ca**

2. Cat Pumps hydroexcavating pumps

Over 50 years of high-pressure pump manufacturing experience has earned Cat Pumps a reputation of producing the highest quality, longest lasting pumps for every market it serves. With its dedication to zero-defect manufacturing, ease of service and availability from stock, Cat Pumps designs and builds high-pressure pumps and systems to suit the demanding environments of the hydroexcavation industry. Popular models include Model 56 with 5.5 gpm at 3,500 psi; Model 56HS with 8.0 gpm at 3,000 psi; Model 660 with 10.0 gpm at 3,000 psi; and Model 3560 with 20.0 gpm at 4,000 psi, or 25.0 gpm at 3,000 psi. **763-780-5440; www.catpumps.com**

3. KAFKO International Oil Eater overnight stain remover

KAFKO International, manufacturers of Oil Eater Cleaner/Degreaser announces Oil Eater overnight stain remover. Using Kafko's expertise in oil cleaning technology, Oil Eater is a concrete cleaner that uses oil-eating microbes to clean deep beneath the surface and effortlessly restore driveways and garages to a like-new appearance. The stain remover pulls out oil stains in three effortless steps: apply, dry and sweep away. It helps restore concrete, brick, asphalt and more. Oil Eater can restore fuel pads, parking garages and driveways in 12 hours. **800-528-0334; www.oileater.com**

4. Vermeer CS GT vacuum excavator water kit

Vermeer expanded the capabilities of its CS GT vacuum excavators with an optional water kit. Now horizontal directional drilling crews and light-duty vacuum operators can soft dig (pothole) utilities and power wash equipment and hard surfaces with this system. The optional water kit comes with a 100-gallon freshwater tank and a pump capable of delivering 2,500 psi at a flow rate of 3.5 gpm. The water kit is factory installed and available on all new CS GT models. **352-728-2222; www.vermeer.com ▼**

This Issue's Feature:

Pipe fusion machine combines popular features of predecessor models

BY CRAIG MANDLI

With the popularity of pipe fusion in the field continuing to increase, new innovations are making the practice easier than ever. The **Tritan 560** from **McElroy** combines features of three of the company's most popular machines: the rugged portability and technology of the TracStar iSeries, pipe loading capabilities of the Talon 2000, and the ability to meet the pipe where it lays, found in the Acrobat QuikFit carriages. With a full 360-degree rotation and a boom that can raise, extend and curl the carriage to approach and load pipe, the Tritan boosts job site efficiency and improves workplace safety by eliminating the need to top-load pipe into the fusion machine.

The Tritan 560 aids in pipe positioning, allowing for more flexibility and increased performance and productivity. With the same rugged, dual rubber tracks found on McElroy TracStar machines, the Tritan offers all-terrain mobility to easily travel across a variety of terrains and can be driven directly to and from the pipe itself.

"That makes it very unique in trench operation," says McElroy product manager Chris Greggs. "Rather than having to have the extra excavation under the pipe, we're able to meet the pipe where it lays and simply lower the carriage down on top of the pipe. Once the fusion is complete, rather than opening the carriage and rolling it out from under the pipe, you simply lift it up."

Tritan 560 from McElroy



The Tritan 560 was designed with operator safety in mind. All functions are wirelessly controlled with the DataLogger, McElroy's touchscreen tablet that also captures the most important information related to fusion operations in real time. No second remote is needed — all controls have been integrated into the DataLogger tablet, allowing a single operator to control all parts of the pipe loading and fusion process. Rather than being tethered to the machine, operators can instead position themselves where they have good visibility and can safely manipulate the machine.

"It is a great machine for use in the trench because it is bottom-loading," Greggs says. "You bring the pipe into the machine from the bottom rather than from the top."

The Tritan is powered by a 50 hp Stage V/Tier 4 Final Compliant Kubota engine. Its heater power varies based on need, allowing for full power during the heat-up phase and lower power when maintaining temperature. This equates to lower fuel consumption and quieter operation.

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THE LATEST:
News

Super Products celebrates its 50th anniversary

Super Products celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Over the past 50 years, Super Products has grown from a small manufacturing company to a nationally recognized supplier of vacuum trucks.

Lionel Moore, Charles O'Bryan and Tom Flynn founded Super Products at the end of 1972. In 1973, the company manufactured its first Super-sucker industrial vacuum loader, followed by the Camel combination sewer cleaner in 1976. In 1981, Super Products was sold to Inductotherm, followed by Specialized Industries LP in 2005, before being acquired by Alamo Group in 2014. Today, the company produces five different vacuum truck product lines and employs over 180 people across the country. Super Products is headquartered in Mukwonago, Wisconsin, and has a broad network of sales representa-

tives supporting contractors, dealers supporting municipalities and, after expanding into the rental market in 2011, nine rental facilities supporting short- and long-term rentals, parts and service.

Talbert Manufacturing celebrating trailer anniversary

Talbert Manufacturing is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the release of its nonground bearing hydraulic detachable gooseneck trailer. The trailers have undergone a series of design adjustments since their inception in 1962 to increase safety throughout the loading and unloading process by offering ample clearance and stability. ▼

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Happenings

CALENDAR

March 14-18

CONEXPO-CON/AGG, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas. Visit www.conexpoconagg.com.

March 15-23

Ohio Contractors Association Annual Convention, The Hotel ARTS, Barcelona, Spain. Visit www.ohiocontractors.org.

March 30 – April 1

Mid-America Trucking Show, Kentucky Expo Center, Louisville, Kentucky. Visit www.truckingshow.com.

April 17-21

Common Ground Alliance Conference & Expo, Caribe Royale, Orlando, Florida. Visit www.cgaconference.com.

April 30 – May 4

NASTT's No-Dig Show; Oregon Convention Center; Portland, Oregon. Visit www.nodigshow.com.

May 12-18

World Tunnel Congress 2023, Megaron Athens International Conference Centre, Athens, Greece. Visit www.wtc2023.gr.

June 4-7

Electric Utility Fleet Managers Conference, Williamsburg Lodge and Conference Center, Williamsburg, Virginia. Visit www.eufmc.com.

June 5-7

Safety 2023 Professional Development Conference & Exposition, Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio. Visit safety.assp.org.

June 11-14

Rapid Excavation & Tunneling Conference, Sheraton Boston Hotel. Visit www.retc.org.

Sept. 11-13

Breakthroughs in Tunneling Short Course, University of Denver – Joy Burns Center, Denver. Visit www.tunnelingshortcourse.com.

Sept. 26-28

The Utility Expo, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, Kentucky. Visit www.theutilityexpo.com.

Sept. 30 - Oct. 4

96th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, McCormick Place, Chicago. Visit www.weftec.org.

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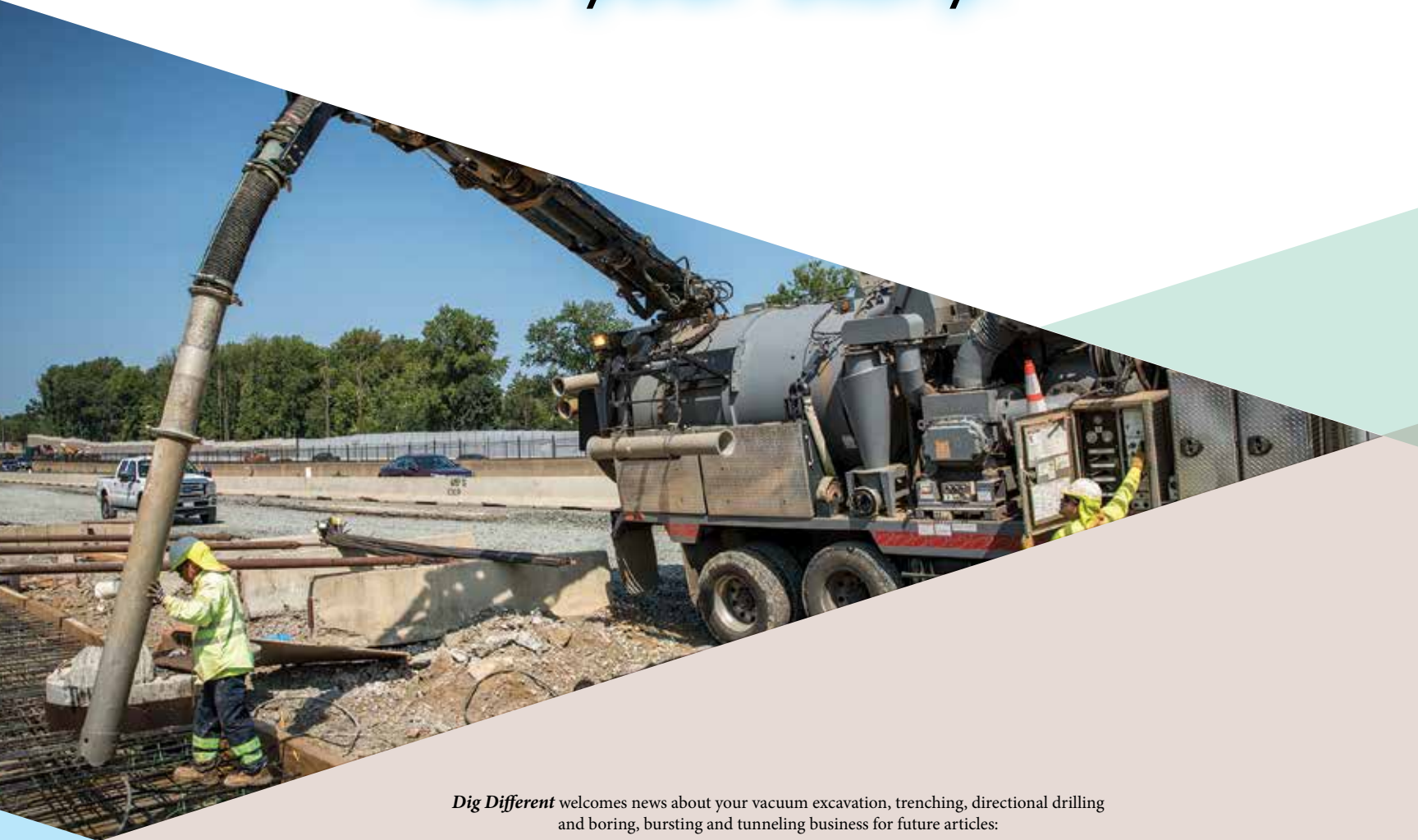


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