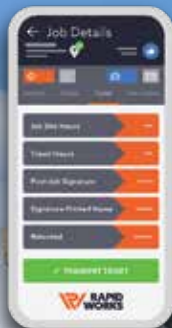


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## A DIFFERENT APPROACH

California startup breaks ground  
with innovation and statewide success

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NEEDS AS MUCH  
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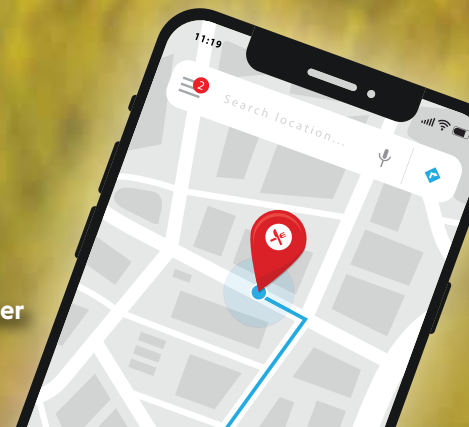
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Development and engineering contractors navigate California's depths with expertise, innovation, and a unique statewide model.

By Giles Lambertson

#### ON THE COVER:

DEVCO Development & Engineering project foreman Drake Rossi (left) operates the digging wand while apprentice technician Caelin Thomason mans the vacuum boom of the HXX Paradigm (TRUVAC) at a job site in Temecula, California. DEVCO was founded a little over a year ago by Chad Decker, Nick Rossi and Donnie Thomason and operates throughout the state of California, offering hydroexcavation and directional drilling along with many other services. (Photography by Matt Dayka)

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# Embracing Growth

## LEARNING FROM YOUR PEERS IN THE UTILITY CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS THE BEST WAY TO FOSTER PRODUCTIVITY AT YOUR OWN COMPANY

BY CORY DELLENBACH, EDITOR

Later this month I'll be hopping on an airplane and making my way from northern Wisconsin to Providence, Rhode Island, to take in the North American Society for Trenchless Technology (NASTT) No-Dig Show.

It's a unique show focused on listening to case studies and educational sessions with contractors or utility owners who talk about projects they've undertaken, lessons they've learned and even upcoming projects.

It's a great experience attending this show, meeting all the contractors doing the work out there and learning firsthand what you in this industry do and how it makes a difference.

### LEARNING AND COLLABORATING

There is a constant source of inspiration and growth that stems from learning and collaborating with peers. In every excavation, directional drill or hydroexcavation project, there lies an opportunity not only to master your craft, but also to glean valuable insights from others in the field.

The utility construction realm is ever-evolving, with innovations in technology, techniques and equipment shaping the way projects are executed. It is in this environment of ongoing change that we find the true power of shared knowledge. One of the goals of *Dig Different* magazine has always been to foster a sense of community among professionals in this industry.

Learning from the experiences of others is a catalyst for progress. Each project, no matter how routine or challenging, provides an opportunity to discover new methods, troubleshoot potential issues and enhance overall efficiency. When you approach your work with a mindset of openness to learning, every project becomes an invaluable lesson, and every job site a classroom.

In the utility construction industry, where precision and safety are important, the opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of your peers is an invaluable asset. For instance, hearing about a directional drilling project that encountered unexpected ground conditions can serve as a cautionary tale for your own endeavors. Conversely, success stories offer a blueprint for excellence that we can incorporate into our practices.

### SHARE YOUR STORY

*Dig Different* is committed to being a platform where professionals can share their experiences, triumphs and lessons learned. This exchange of knowledge not only strengthens the industry but also creates a sense of camaraderie among those who are dedicated to the same cause. The stories featured in our magazine are not just narratives of contractors or projects; they are testimonials of the collective wisdom that propels this industry forward.

Every contractor, engineer and technician brings a unique set of skills and experiences to the table. Embracing this diversity allows us to see familiar challenges through different lenses, sparking creativity and innovation. What may be routine for one may be groundbreaking for another, and there is the magic of collaboration.

As we delve into the stories of companies like DEVCO Development & Engineering in this issue, we witness the convergence of varied backgrounds — real estate, banking and underground utility work — into a successful venture. It is a testament to the idea that embracing diverse expertise can lead to the creation of something exceptional.

In the spirit of fostering collaboration, *Dig Different* would like to invite contractors, utility construction companies and utility owners to share their stories with us. These can be their own company stories, success stories on projects that you've completed or lessons you've learned in this industry. We invite you to actively participate, share your experiences and be a part of this exciting exchange of ideas.

The utility construction industry is not just about digging trenches or drilling holes; it's about the people who passionately pursue excellence in their craft. It's about the shared commitment to innovation, safety, and efficiency. As we learn from one another, we not only elevate our individual capabilities but contribute to the growth of this industry as a whole.

You can reach me at [editor@digdifferent.com](mailto:editor@digdifferent.com) or 715-350-8436 with your stories and success stories.

Enjoy this issue! ▼



THE UTILITY CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS NOT JUST ABOUT DIGGING TRENCHES OR DRILLING HOLES; IT'S ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO PASSIONATELY PURSUE EXCELLENCE IN THEIR CRAFT.

Tell us how YOU solved challenges in the alternative excavation industry and we may feature you in an upcoming issue. Send a note today to [editor@digdifferent.com](mailto:editor@digdifferent.com) or call 715-350-8436.

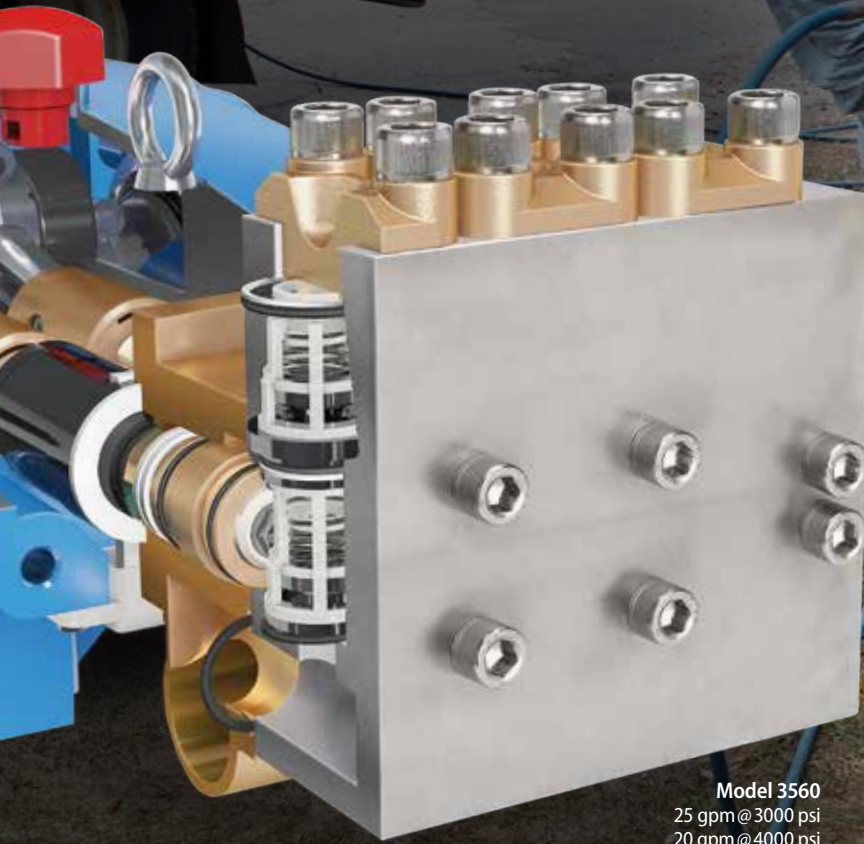


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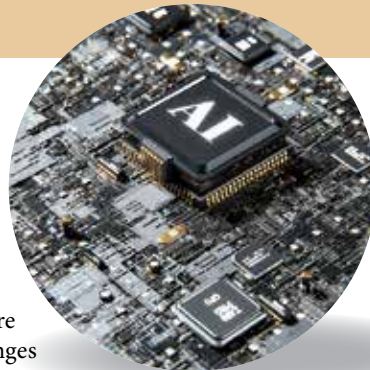


## EMPLOYEE ADVANCEMENT

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## HOME SERVICE BUSINESSES

### Is 2024 a Defining Year?

Business owners in the home service sector are bracing for a year that promises both challenges and opportunities. It's not just about the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, which are undeniably reshaping consumer expectations. Equally significant is the global climate of numerous elections influencing consumer sentiment in subtle yet profound ways.

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### More Than Traffic Control

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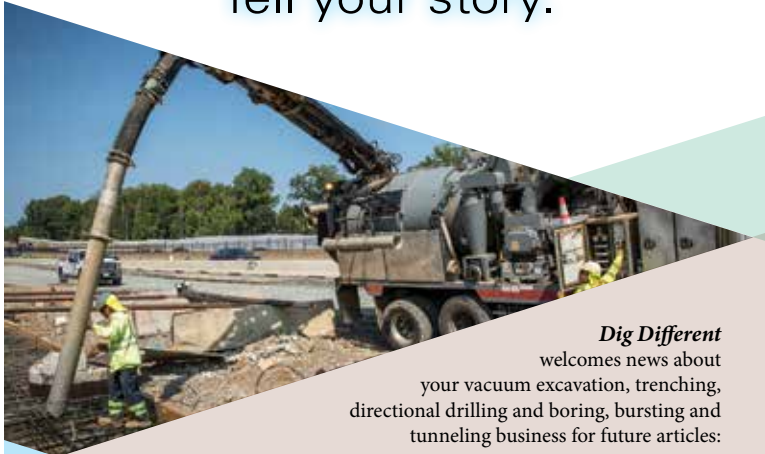
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Drake Rossi, left, project foreman, remotely sets up the HXX Paradigm (TRUVAC) hydroexcavator with the remote, while Caelin Thomason, apprentice technician, prepares the attachments for the job.

# A DIFFERENT APPROACH

**DEVELOPMENT AND ENGINEERING CONTRACTORS NAVIGATE CALIFORNIA'S DEPTHS WITH EXPERTISE, INNOVATION AND A UNIQUE STATEWIDE MODEL**

STORY: GILES LAMBERTSON PHOTOS: MATT DAYKA

DEVCO Development & Engineering is not just another California startup. It's a one-year-old company with a precocious understanding of what it takes to succeed. Its maturity lies in the life and work experience of the three native Californians who partnered to form the company.

One — 39-year-old Chad Decker — is a former professional baseball player and real estate maven. Another — 44-year-old Donnie Thomason — is a former Navy medical corpsman who subsequently started a successful mortgage banking firm. The third is Nick Rossi, a 45-year-old seasoned tradesman whose decades of experience in belowground construction are the fulcrum of DEVCO's early success.

The partnership of the three men stemmed from a lunch meeting between Thomason and Rossi in which Thomason sought to collaborate with Rossi in

a new enterprise. Decker already was sharing office space with Thomason in their mortgage, real estate and property development ventures. Subsequent discussions among the trio of businessmen led to the launching of DEVCO.

"Donnie and I ran businesses and were involved in property development," says Decker, the company's chief operating officer. "Nick is the one with the expertise." Rossi is also DEVCO's chief financial officer.

## A STATEWIDE APPROACH

The company is headquartered in Temecula, a city situated between Los Angeles and San Diego and an economic suburb of each. Yet DEVCO is not a "local" company in any real sense, nor a regional one. Its targeted market is ... all of California.



**"WE DO WHAT WE SAY WE ARE GOING TO DO. WE SHOW UP WHEN WE SAY WE'LL SHOW UP AND GET JOBS DONE AS WE SAY WE'LL GET THEM DONE."**

Chad Decker



"I'm flying up north next week about a project," says Decker. "We've worked down south near the border. We try to cover it all. We're all over it all the time. We have some partners in Northern California who work with us on projects there."

Such partnering with other companies helps explain how DEVCO can take on widely scattered projects with a relatively small fleet of drills and vac trucks and a total of 12 employees. Decker says the company's pricing structure helps it compete with local companies at the other end of the state.

And what is the mainstay of the company's business? Horizontal directional drilling and hydroexcavation work. "From our experience, they go hand in hand, depending on the municipality where we're working and the job itself. Right now, our work is split about 50-50 between those two services," Decker says.

Consequently, virtually all of DEVCO's revenue stream is generated by those two offered services. Its pipe bursting and sewer line repair services are largely still being marketed — "though we have the experience to do them," says Decker.

A project in San Diego for the state department of transportation illustrates the firm's drilling and hydrovac capacity. The effort involved running a line under the on- and off-ramps of a freeway and across a corner of San Diego State University.

"We expected to directional drill the entire site but ended up trenching much of it with a hydrovac unit because of unexpected conditions," Decker recalls. For one thing, an older roadway was discovered buried beneath the freeway, which precluded drilling. The abundant presence of cobblestones and boulders in the soil also thwarted drillers.

## **DEVCO Development & Engineering Temecula, California**

**OWNERS:** Donnie Thomason, Nick Rossi, Chad Decker

**YEARS IN BUSINESS:** 1

**EMPLOYEES:** 12

**SERVICES:** Hydroexcavation (potholing, trenching, etc.), horizontal directional drilling, pipe bursting, trenchless sewer line repair and turnkey management of belowground and ground-level construction projects

**SERVICE AREA:** California

**WEBSITE:** [developmentandengineering.com](http://developmentandengineering.com)

**SOCIAL:** [linkedin.com/company/devco-development-and-engineering](https://www.linkedin.com/company/devco-development-and-engineering)

"In that situation, we ran into things we didn't expect, but we found a way to get the project done," Decker says. "Our working motto is to always find a way to complete a job as soon as possible." In this case, completion took two months and depended heavily on Rossi's 20 years of hydrovac and directional drilling experience.

Other daunting jobs include one Rossi remembers on a Northern California property that offered limited access. "Equipment had to stay in the front of the residence," he recalls, "so we had to string out vacuum and pressure washer hoses, and Visqueen to protect the driveway — all so we could complete a 10-foot-deep, 80-foot-long trench that crossed over a sewer main."



Drake Rossi sets up the HXX Paradigm (TRUVAC) hydroexcavator on a job site in Temecula, California. Hydroexcavation and HDD work are the mainstay of the company's business.

Sounds like a headache. "That type of job is satisfying because we overcome hurdles and can see the results," Rossi says. "We like the challenge. The projects are satisfying."

### A UNIQUE MODEL

So, DEVCO Development & Engineering is building a name for itself as a belowground-level utility and construction services company. Its new-company approach is a little different than most: working the entire state rather than establishing itself in a smaller market before expanding; and emphasizing only two of its services — hydrovac and HDD.

The business model is by design.

"We quickly realized when we got together that there have been a lot of things done the same way for a long time," Decker says. "Really, things in the industry have been done the same for 25 years or so. We love taking a different approach to growing a company, innovating, moving the needle a little and giving clients more opportunities." This approach has, among other things, resulted in DEVCO taking on jobs that are more difficult than usual, jobs that other contractors tend to shy away from.

One reason the company is able to do this is because of the professional background of its ownership. Thomason, the company's CEO, brought into DEVCO an A contractor's state license, which permits contracting of underground work. Decker has a B license for contracting aboveground construction work.

"Consequently, we can build just about anything," Decker says. "The combination of licenses sets us apart from competing contractors and is a market strength. It's definitely an advantage to have both licenses."



DEVCO Development & Engineering owners include, from left, Chad Decker, chief operating officer; Donnie Thomason, chief executive officer; and Nick Rossi, chief financial officer.

What this means for DEVCO is that HDD and hydrovac work — though absolutely instrumental to the company's early success — may at some point become just two of a suite of services offered to DEVCO clients. A hint of what might be coming can be seen on the company's website. Under the landing page banner are listed the following categories of services: trenchless technology, site development, roadway construction, residential construction and environmental.

While the company is presently not equipped to build roads, nor construct houses, the intent is to gear up for these and other tasks as quickly as a client requests it.

"What this means is that we'll be able to do a little bit of everything," Decker says. "We can offer a turnkey project service for clients, not only for drilling, but for things like building or repairing roadways. We'll be able to do it all without the clients having to find a contractor for each piece of the project with three pricing markups."

**"REALLY, THINGS IN THE INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN DONE THE SAME FOR 25 YEARS OR SO. WE LOVE TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO GROWING A COMPANY, INNOVATING, MOVING THE NEEDLE A LITTLE, AND GIVING CLIENTS MORE OPPORTUNITIES."**

Chad Decker

### IMPRESSIVE FLEET

The company's current fleet of equipment is comprised of three Ditch Witch HDD rigs — a JT10, JT20, and a 130 hp JT25 with 27,000 pounds of thrust and pullback force, two trailered Ditch Witch hydrovac units, each with 12-cubic yard capacity, and a dump truck. Rossi says he has worked with multiple brands of equipment through the years, but prefers Ditch Witch because the machines are durable and well-supported by dealer and manufacturer.

On the vacuum excavation side, DEVCO uses Paradigm units from TRUVAC. The Paradigm comes equipped with a 6-inch vacuum system, extendable to 14-feet, 6-inch reach and a 210-degree rotation and have a positive displacement blower rated at 15 inch-HG and 2200 cfm. The debris bodies on the trucks are 675 gallon capacity. The water pump is a 8 gpm at 2500 psi pump.

## A Winning Formula

California isn't a wasteland underserved by potholing or directional drilling contractors. Yet three veteran businessmen in Southern California opted to start a new utility services company to compete in the busy market.

Convinced they had something to offer property owners and municipalities that competing contractors didn't, the partners of DEVCO Development & Engineering launched their company a little over a year ago. They immediately experienced success.

Why? First of all, Donnie Thomason, Nick Rossi and Chad Decker each already had experienced success in, respectively, banking, underground utility work or real estate. They knew what they were doing, were sufficiently capitalized to do it — and were able to persuade clients to let them try.

"We do what we say we are going to do," says Decker, the company's chief operating officer. "We show up when we say we'll show up and get jobs done as we say we'll get them done. Our word is every-

thing. We're there early and we're there late. Our goal is to underpromise and overdeliver."

The formula is working. One of the company's principal tenets is always to be open and responsive. Decker points out that his and Thomason's business backgrounds were in real estate "and in that industry, if you miss a call, they call the next office instead. We try not to miss a call."

The COO mentions more than once the company's commitment to constant communication. "We try to be overly communicative with clients." And clients pick up on that? "They definitely notice that we are always in touch."

The other abiding rule is safety, he says. Keeping employees safe while they operate powerful drilling and vacuum equipment is a DEVCO priority. "Those are the two big things guiding us as a company: an open door for employees and clients and safe operation on job sites."

One of the advantages to the Paradigm units is that they come in either a Class 6 non-CDL version or a Class 7 chassis.

So far, the company has not had any difficulty finding operators for the machinery. Under Rossi's tutelage, vendor programs train them "the DEVCO way." The company also uses the U.S. Department of Defense's SkillBridge program to transition military veterans into DEVCO jobs. One of the partners, Thomason, is an Iraq War veteran.

"We have found it very rewarding to train veterans to become members of our team," says Rossi.

An upcoming project will keep the machines running for 60 days or so, according to Decker. The client has 20 properties in Southern California and wants to upgrade multiple underground power lines on several of them, with some of the lines running more than a thousand feet from a power source. "These are very challenging jobs and the client is very picky on what he wants to see done," says Decker, obviously upbeat about the challenge.

### A FLUID FUTURE

DEVCO Development & Engineering is an infant company becoming a grown-up one as quickly as opportunities present themselves. Looking back

on the progress of the company so far, Decker says the partners wouldn't do anything different if a do-over were possible — not even the "oops!" moments.

"The challenges we faced were learning experiences," he says of such moments. "We were very fortunate to have had a very successful first year in business. It was a real leap forward."

And where are such leaps leading the company? Instead of talking in terms of a five- or 10-year plan, Decker speaks of growing and maintaining a level of professionalism with clients until, in a few years, the partners might weigh buyout offers.

Then again, Thomason and his wife have three sons, and Rossi has two sons, notes Decker. "It may be that one or more of the boys will choose to get into DEVCO and continue to grow the company." ▼

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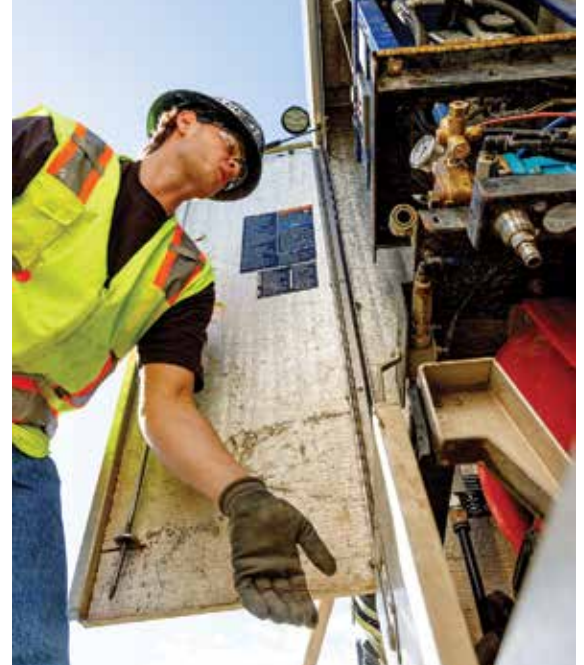
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The DEVCO team includes, from left, Nick Rossi, chief financial officer; Courtney Morales, compliance and safety officer; Drake Rossi, project foreman; Melissa San Roman, accounting; Chad Decker, chief operating officer; Cheryl Thomason, scheduling and dispatch; Donnie Thomason, CEO; and Caelin Thomason, apprentice. Not pictured: Kellan Rossi, apprentice.

DEVCO's target market is the entire state of California.



# Streamlining Efficiency

## OFFICE AND EQUIPMENT SOFTWARE UPDATES WILL HELP KEEP YOU AND YOUR TEAM COMMUNICATING AND WORKING TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY TO ENSURE YOUR TEAM REMAINS PRODUCTIVE

BY CORY DELLENBACH

In the fast-paced world of utility construction, where precision and efficiency are important, the role of office software in project management cannot be overstated. From project planning to resource allocation, communication and documentation, software tools have become invaluable assets.

However, their effectiveness heavily relies on one crucial aspect — regular updates.

Utility construction projects often involve planning, coordination and execution. Project managers, engineers and other stakeholders rely on office software for many tasks, including project scheduling, budgeting, resource management and collaboration.

As the industry continues to evolve with technological advancements, software developers consistently release updates to address security vulnerabilities, enhance features and improve overall performance.

### ENHANCING SECURITY MEASURES

In an era where cyber threats are becoming more sophisticated, maintaining the security of sensitive project data is needed.

Outdated software is a prime target for hackers as it may have unpatched vulnerabilities that can be exploited. This poses a significant risk to the confidentiality and integrity of project-related information.

Regular software updates ensure that security patches are applied promptly, minimizing the risk of data breaches and unauthorized access.

### UNLEASHING NEW FEATURES AND CAPABILITIES

Software developers are continually innovating to meet the evolving needs of industries such as utility construction. Updates often bring new features and capabilities that can significantly improve workflow efficiency.

For instance, the latest project management software might introduce new scheduling or collaboration tools, allowing project teams to work more cohesively.

### COMPATIBILITY AND INTEROPERABILITY

Utility construction projects involve several software tools for various purposes — from CAD software for design to project management tools for scheduling. Keeping these tools up to date ensures compatibility and interoperability between different applications.

Incompatibility issues can lead to data loss, project delays and increased frustration among team members.

### STREAMLINING COLLABORATION

Effective collaboration is the cornerstone of successful utility construction projects. Office software plays a pivotal role in communication and collaboration among team members, whether they are working on-site or remotely.

Updates often include improvements to communication features, real-time collaboration tools, and integrations with other commonly used soft-



Keeping office computers updated is just a little piece of the puzzle to ensuring your teams continue to work cohesively in the office and the field. Software needs to be taken care of just like the other equipment you have.

ware. Keeping these tools updated ensures that project teams can collaborate seamlessly, sharing information and making decisions in a timely manner.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR STAYING UPDATED

In order to ensure your company isn't falling behind on software updates, there are simple things that can be implemented:

**1. Establish a software update policy:** Create a clear policy outlining the frequency and process for software updates. This policy should be communicated to all team members, emphasizing the importance of staying current with the latest software versions.

**2. Regularly check for updates:** Encourage team members to regularly check for software updates. This includes computers, laptops and cell-phones. Many applications have automatic update features that can be enabled, ensuring that users receive the latest updates without manual intervention.

**3. Test updates in a controlled environment:** Before deploying updates across the entire team, conduct testing in a controlled environment to identify any potential compatibility issues or bugs. This proactive approach helps minimize disruptions to ongoing projects.

**4. Provide training on new features:** When significant updates are released, provide training sessions to familiarize team members with new features and capabilities. This ensures that the team can leverage the full potential of the updated software.

**5. Backup data before updates:** As a precautionary measure, instruct team members to backup critical project data before performing software updates. This minimizes the risk of data loss in the event of unexpected issues during the update process.

**REGULARLY UPDATING THIS SOFTWARE IS NOT JUST A BEST PRACTICE — IT'S A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE.**

In the demanding landscape of utility construction, staying ahead requires leveraging the full potential of technological tools. Office software is the backbone of project management, communication and collaboration.

Regularly updating this software is not just a best practice — it's a strategic imperative. By doing so, utility construction professionals can enhance security, unlock new features, ensure compatibility, optimize performance, and streamline collaboration.

Embracing a proactive approach to software updates is key to achieving efficiency, productivity, and success in the ever-evolving field of utility construction. ▼



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# Take a Lesson From Taylor Swift ... the Employer

**WHILE MONEY CERTAINLY HELPS MOTIVATE HARD WORK AND LOYALTY, IT'S NOT THE ONLY WAY TO SHOW YOUR TEAM THAT YOU CARE**

BY JEFF HADEN

**F**our years ago, when I talked with Wright Thompson about his book *The Cost of These Dreams*, he called Taylor Swift “the most incredible person in American life.”

As Thompson said, Swift experienced global, nuclear success at a young age. And she’s continued to be incredibly successful. Yet she’s never had that “teen star” meltdown. Her success is amazing, but even more incredible is that she’s mature, well-rounded and happy.

That accomplishment is truly staggering. Also staggering is the estimated \$1 billion-plus her latest tour was predicted to gross. Granted, gross is one thing, net is another.

And there is a lesson to be learned by small business owners from Swift’s story of financial success and gratitude shown to those around her.

## FOLLOW THE MONEY

Say Swift’s average show generates \$10 million in total revenue (even though some estimates place that number as high as \$13 million). With 130-plus shows planned for the tour, that’s well over \$1 billion. Then there’s merchandise. And album sales. And streaming. And money from Capital One, the tour’s presenting sponsor. Some estimates put the total gross at \$1.4 billion.

But stadium fees, promoter fees and expenses eat into that gross.

And so does another expense Swift willingly incurred. Swift reportedly gave bonuses to everyone who worked on her show. Dancers. Sound technicians. Riggers. Caterers.

And truck drivers: According to Michael Scherkenbach, founder and CEO of Shomotion trucking, Swift’s father, Scott, made a short speech and then handed each driver a handwritten note from Swift, along with a check for \$100,000. All the bonuses — and the impact on Swift’s bottom line — reportedly totaled \$55 million.

Which you could argue is (relatively) insignificant.

The estimated gross for Swift’s tour may be conservative, since dates kept getting added to the schedule. Pollstar estimated ticket sales alone grossed \$1.4 billion, a number they call “conservative.” After expenses, stadium costs, other fees, etc., Swift likely nets between 40% and 60%. To be conservative, let’s call her personal earnings \$4 million.

That means Swift will net somewhere around \$500 million from ticket sales alone. Add in merchandise sales, sponsor revenue, album sales and streaming fees, and even after expenses, Swift’s net worth will likely go up more somewhere between \$300 million and \$400 million.

In that light, deciding to reward the people who help make her tour successful doesn’t seem that staggering.

But still: It’s \$55 million dollars. No matter how much you make, \$55 million is still a lot of money.



Jeff Haden

## RECOGNIZING TEAMWORK

But maybe that’s another reason Swift is so successful. No one ever does anything worthwhile on their own; it takes 50 truck drivers just to haul all the equipment from one city to another. Staging the spectacle requires hundreds of people. Without Swift, there is no show, but without them, there is no show.

At its core, employment is a transaction. Your employees work for a paycheck. (As Don Draper in the series *Mad Men* replied when writer Peggy Olson said he never thanks her for her work, “That’s what the money is for!”)

But we all want to feel part of a team. We all want to feel a part of something bigger than ourselves. Feeling a true purpose starts with knowing what to care about, and why. And, most important, that we are cared for — that we are valued, respected and important.

Want your employees to care about your business? First prove that you care about them. Maybe, like Swift, that could mean rewarding their hard work in a tangible way.

**PROVE THAT YOU CARE ABOUT [EMPLOYEES]. MAYBE, LIKE SWIFT, THAT COULD MEAN REWARDING THEIR HARD WORK IN A TANGIBLE WAY. BUT FOR MANY SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE BOOTSTRAPPING THEIR WAY TOWARD PROFITABILITY, THAT MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE.**

But for many small business owners, especially those bootstrapping their way toward profitability, that might not be possible. However you can still prove you care in other ways. Asking for suggestions and input, and acting on that input. Providing recognition and praise for specific reasons, not just a generic “thanks for your hard work.” Creating informal leadership roles that show you respect the employee’s judgment.

Granting not just responsibility, but authority.

You don’t have to be the most incredible person in American life to make a difference in the lives of your employees.

You just have to want to — and then act on that desire.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Haden is a contributing editor for Inc.com and a LinkedIn Influencer. ▼



## Business Software

### RapidWorks

RapidWorks heavy equipment job management software solutions eliminate the backlog of processing job tickets and lets companies invoice daily so they can get paid faster. It allows companies to manage operations and optimize fleet utilization with modules to schedule jobs, allocate trucks and operators, and invoice job tickets. Customers receive automatic insights of all aspects of their business, so they can make smart decisions to grow their business. From booking more jobs, assigning trucks and operators, and managing payroll and invoices, it helps hydrovac businesses run smoother.



**303-500-3050; www.rapidworks.com/dig**

## Fleet Management Software

### Ditch Witch Orange Intel

To help equipment owners keep track of their fleet's performance and increase the profitability of their business, Ditch Witch offers the Orange Intel fleet management system. Designed to centralize fleet and machine information, maintenance indicators and other vital data and insights, contractors can more efficiently monitor their job site history and equipment performance to improve their business. Through comprehensive reporting capabilities, operators have the power to track individual machine indicators, including working and idle hours, which enables them to schedule routine maintenance. The technical data provided in each machine can illuminate potential problems before they occur, such as keeping an eye on fuel and DEF levels, battery performance and other vital systems. With the ability to insert GPS-based, geofencing options, contractors can digitally construct a "fence" around their shop yards or job sites to track equipment movement and locate a lost or stolen machine. The notifications are then sent directly to contractors' desktops or mobile devices.



**580-336-4402; www.ditchwitch.com**

### Fleetio

Fleetio's suite of cloud- and mobile-based fleet management solutions enables fleets of all sizes to automate fleet operations and manage asset life cycles. Users can instantly access and update data regarding inspections, scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, parts, fuel and drivers. It improves communication and streamlines issue resolution with its mobile app, email notifications and reminders. It also integrates with telematics solutions for automated odometer updates, DTC handling and fuel location reporting that pairs with fuel cards to automatically log transaction data at fuel up. Fleet managers, drivers, technicians, parts managers and other personnel have access to the tools and information they need anytime, anywhere. It powers public and private fleets in more than 80 countries in a variety of different industries.



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### Ritam Technologies Summit Smart Mapping

Ritam Technologies offers Smart Mapping in its Summit route management and rental system software. Previously, maps displayed optimized routes for efficiency and route assignments. Summit now allows the user to display a route or single address on the map and then drag any pin to a new position

while the program updates its references automatically. In addition, for any location pin, the user can assign a new route and day instantly. The dynamic route monitoring screen allows the user to see technicians' current locations and the status of each job on each color-coded route as unvisited, arrived, completed, issue or incomplete.



**800-662-8471; www.ritam.com**

## GPS

### DPL Telematics AssetCommand Base

AssetCommand Base from DPL Telematics is designed to increase driver safety and productivity while decreasing the costs and risk of vehicle accidents and theft. Managers can remotely shut down their machines, wirelessly locate them anytime via GPS, collect odometer/runtime readings, track service intervals and receive real-time alerts for speeding or potentially dangerous driving. Driver ID options include iButton or RFID badges to restrict access to authorized drivers and correctly log each driver's activity. Users can also receive alerts for loss of power and boundary or curfew violations to curb unauthorized use. It is palm-sized, has no external antenna and contains an internal backup battery to continue operating the unit if disconnected. Customers are allowed to deactivate and reactivate anytime without penalty.



**800-897-8093; www.dpltel.com**

## Monitoring/Tracking Software

### Geoforce

The Geoforce all-in-one equipment tracking solution includes a rugged GPS tracker designed specifically for demanding environments, along with connected monitoring software that provides 24/7 access to asset location and utilization information. Available software add-ons can help manage rental assets as well as equipment inspections, maintenance and compliance. It can help keep projects on schedule and on budget, improve productivity by reducing asset downtime, decrease labor costs associated with waiting on or searching for equipment, and reduce risk of theft or loss. It can be used to track all types of construction assets and equipment from trailers and waste bins to high-value attachments and implements, yellow iron and other powered equipment.



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# THE LATEST: Products



1

## 1. Cat Pumps Model 3560 for hydroexcavating

The Cat Pumps Model 3560 has been the choice of OEMs and truck fabricators for over 20 years. Enhanced durability makes it perfect for mobile and industrial applications, including hydroexcavating, jetting and washdown. Every detail has been optimized to produce a reliable pump with excellent service life. The solid block 316 stainless steel discharge manifold safeguards against high-pressure spikes, cavitation and flaking. Meticulously designed components like solid ceramic plungers, higher-quality seals and machined 316 stainless steel valves and seats keep pumps running longer. The 3560 is dual-rated for 25 gpm at 3,000 psi or 20 gpm at 4,000 psi and can be driven by a belt, PTO shaft or a hydraulic motor with a bell housing and flexible couple assembly. Inside and out, the company's pumps are built to keep working under the most demanding conditions. See why professionals worldwide have trusted Cat Pumps for over half a century. **763-780-5440; www.catpumps.com**



2

## 2. Hitachi ZAXIS-5N compact excavators

Hitachi announced the latest upgrades to the ZAXIS-5N compact excavators. Updated features include: five-stage auxiliary flow rate changer on the ZX50U-5N to ZX60USB-5N; blade float option on the ZX30U-5N to ZX60USB-5N; complete hydraulic quick-coupler piping on premium versions of the ZX30U-5N to ZX60USB-5N; second auxiliary hydraulic piping on premium versions of the ZX30U-5N to ZX60USB-5N; LED work lights; and a USB power outlet available on cab-equipped excavators. The ZAXIS-5N excavators provide simplified access for maintenance with a hinged door that provides wide-open access to the side-by-side oil cooler and radiator core for easier clean-out. The engine cover slides vertically with less rear projection for ease of maintenance in confined spaces. **866-973-0394; www.hitachicm.com ▼**

## This Issue's Feature:

### Measurement technology firm offers fiber-optic sensing options

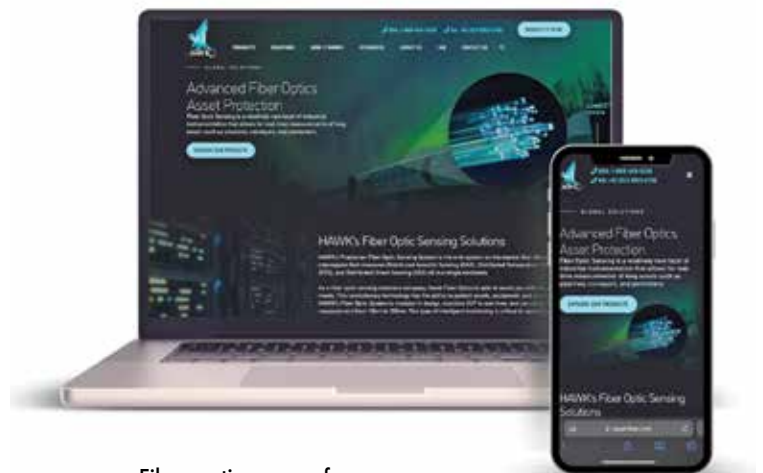
BY CRAIG MANDLI

When it comes to long-range monitoring, accuracy and reliability are crucial. Traditional monitoring technologies often have limitations in terms of sensitivity, response time, and environmental durability. **Fiber-optic sensors** solve those issues, making them a go-to solution for various industries due to their exceptional capabilities.

The sensors are extensively used in industries such as oil and gas for both upstream and downstream applications. They can be used to monitor pipeline integrity, detect leaks, and measure temperature and pressure changes. Real-time information obtained from fiber-optic sensors enables immediate action and prevents accidents, enhancing operational efficiency. **Hawk Measurement Systems** has embraced the technology, offering solutions on a dedicated fiber-optic sensing website, hawkfiber.com.

According to Jack Evans, global president of HAWK, the website is designed to elevate the user experience and provide an educational platform for the company's fiber-optic sensing solutions. It features a comprehensive product showcase, allowing visitors to learn about the diverse range of cutting-edge fiber-optic sensing products the company has to offer.

"From customer testimonials to detailed descriptions, customers can now make informed decisions and learn about this revolutionary technology that is changing the market for asset measurement," says Evans. "We take great care in designing and developing technologies to solve customer needs. Fiber-optic sensing is another example of adapting technology to meet



Fiber-optic sensors from Hawk Measurement Systems

and exceed our customers' requirements for improved safety, increased efficiencies, and reduced downtime."

The technology is a relatively new facet of industrial instrumentation that allows for real-time measurements of long assets such as pipelines, conveyors, and perimeters. According to Evans, HAWK's Praetorian Fiber Optic Sensing System offers a single interrogator that measures distributed acoustic sensing (das), distributed temperature sensing (dts), and distributed strain sensing all in a single enclosure. This technology has the ability to protect assets, equipment, and perimeters. The system is modular in design, monitors 24/7 in real-time, and can range in measurement from 6 to 93 miles. Evans says that this type of intelligent monitoring is critical to operating efficiently and protecting valuable assets.

"Our website was developed to make it even easier to access information online for this exciting technology," he says.

**888-429-5538; www.hawkfiber.com**

# Happenings

**April 11-12**

**National Heavy Equipment Show**, International Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. Visit [nhes.ca](http://nhes.ca).

**April 14-18**

**NASTT's No-Dig Show**; Rhode Island Convention Center; Providence. Visit [nodigshow.com](http://nodigshow.com).

**April 14-18**

**Common Ground Alliance Conference & Expo**, The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Visit [cgaconference.com](http://cgaconference.com).

**April 16**

**Underground Contractors Association of Illinois Spring Showcase**, Venuti's Italian Restaurant & Banquet Hall, Addison, Illinois. Visit [uca.org](http://uca.org).

**April 19-25**

**World Tunnel Congress 2024**, Shenzhen World Exhibition & Conference Center, China. Visit [wtc2024.cn](http://wtc2024.cn).

**May 22-24**

**NUCA 2024 Washington Summit**, Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Visit [wedigamerica.org](http://wedigamerica.org).

**June 2-5**

**Electric Utility Fleet Managers Conference**, Williamsburg Lodge and Conference Center, Virginia. Visit [eufmc.com](http://eufmc.com).

**June 23-26**

**North American Tunneling Conference**, Music City Center, Nashville, Tennessee. Visit [natconference.com](http://natconference.com).

**August 7-9**

**Safety 2024 Professional Development Conference & Exposition**, Colorado Convention Center, Denver. Visit [safety.assp.org](http://safety.assp.org).

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## THE LATEST:

# News

### Vanair strengthens product lineup with Grip Idle Management acquisition

Vanair announced the successful acquisition of Grip Idle Management, a company recognized for its technology in advanced vehicle engine idle reduction. Vanair will integrate Grip Idle Management's systems into its comprehensive range of vehicle solutions, offering customers a broader array of innovative products and features to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs. Grip Idle Management, presently based in Ontario, Canada, will be relocated to Vanair's headquarters in Michigan City, Indiana.

### NUCA celebrates 60 years of service

In 2024, the National Utility Contractors Association will be celebrating its establishment 60 years ago by utility construction contractors seek-

ing an organization to represent its interests in Washington and local communities. Since then, NUCA has grown from 150 members to more than 2,000 leading industry companies. NUCA members consist of utility and excavation contractors who provide the materials and workforce to build and maintain America's network of subsurface water, sewer, gas, telecommunications and electric infrastructure.

### McElroy names Michael Grant new VP of operations

McElroy has hired Michael Grant as the company's new vice president of operations. He began his career with Texas Instruments, developing CNC programs for Department of Defense machined



Michael Grant

components. From there, he branched into design, prototype and manufacturing engineering roles, where he took on various leadership positions, including in aircraft manufacturing, consumer home goods and construction equipment. MicGrant spent the last eight years with the Toro Co., formerly known as Ditch Witch/The Charles Machine Works, in Perry, Oklahoma.

### Matt Timberlake to lead United Felts after Vortex acquisition

Matt Timberlake will assume the role of president at United Felts following its acquisition by Vortex Companies. With over 30 years' experience in the underground utility sector, Timberlake brings extensive experience and stra-



Matt Timberlake

tegic acumen to lead United Felts, including MaxLiner and FerraTex Solutions, into a future marked by growth and success. He joined the Vortex executive team in 2019 after the acquisition of Ted Berry Co., his family business. Timberlake previously served as the senior vice president of Shared Services, and played a crucial role in enhancing efficiency and transparency across product and service divisions. ▼

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