




**YOUR PEST CONTROL BUSINESS:
CREATE A BETTER TEAM IN 4 STEPS** 



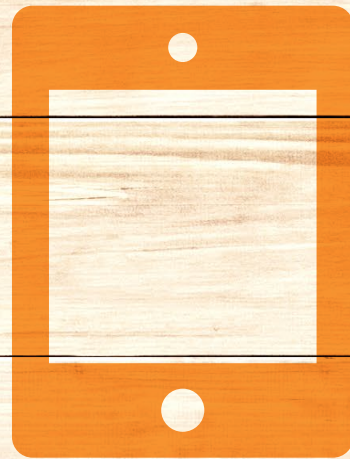
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INTRO

As an owner or manager of a pest control business, you're no stranger to the age-old problem confronted by every company whose employees work mostly in the field: *How do you get the most out of your employees when you're not physically present to supervise them?*

On one level, you have the same challenge that every mobile business does. Some employees simply lack the professionalism to work productively without supervision, and some fail to possess the people skills required to represent your business professionally to a diverse group of customers.

Your challenges are bigger

But that challenge may be even greater for you than it is in most other industries. **First**, the industry is growing quickly. The Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the U.S. will add nearly 13,000 new pest control workers by 2022, a growth rate of 20 percent a year. Environmental and other factors have led to an explosion in recent years of certain kinds of pests, causing rapid expansion of businesses.

Also, your employees deal with dangerous chemicals that can harm and kill. (*Indeed, that's what they're supposed to do.*) An improperly applied chemical in a customer's home could hurt a pet or a human. In addition to being a tragedy, that could cost you your business, and more.



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INTRO

Pest control is dangerous work for technicians, too. Crawling underneath houses and through cluttered attics and basements, carrying heavy equipment, and confronting rodents and other animals are all in a day's work for your employees.

Even when no one is harmed, and even when no improper application of a pesticide is made, any number of violations of federal or state regulations could cost you many thousands of dollars, or your license to operate.

How much of your business is in the hands of your staff?

Think about how much of your livelihood is in the hands of your pest control technicians. You trust your employees with more than just handling chemicals correctly and filling out every report as required. You also trust them to interact with your customers. So even if they're doing the "pest control" part of their job right, if they're not also dealing well with the human side of your business, you could get bad ratings on online review sites and fail to get the word-of-mouth referrals that businesses like yours thrive on.

That's why it is absolutely vital that your workers be fully trained and qualified, and that you continue to carefully monitor their work, even if you can't be with them every day.

In this eBook, we'll take a closer look at how to better empower and manage your employees, helping you to create a responsive, service-oriented team that's as good at capturing and controlling business-critical data as it is at ridding the world of rodents and roaches.



Think about how much of your livelihood is in the hands of your pest control technicians.

STEP 1

KNOW THE REGULATIONS — AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER



Pest control companies must obey two regulatory masters. The federal Environmental Protection Agency sets limits on what chemicals may be used under what circumstances. State regulators may ban or restrict the use of some substances that the federal government hasn't, set licensing and training requirements for your techs and managers, and demand the maintenance of records concerning the use of chemical products.

It is your responsibility, as the business license holder, to make sure that your techs follow the regulations regarding the safe use of pesticides, as well as all the necessary recordkeeping.

In most states, pest control companies are required to have at least one supervisor dedicated to those compliance requirements. For example, California requires that pest control companies have "at least one person in a supervisory position who holds a valid qualified applicator license at each principle and branch location."

That's not all, however. After becoming licensed, California (*whose regulations are strict but not atypical*) requires careful records management. **Companies must:**

-  **Retain pest control application notification records for two years**
-  **Retain records of pesticide use for two years**
-  **Submit pesticide use reports to the county agricultural commissioner's office in the county where the application was made**
-  **Have valid permits for restricted materials used**

When chemical pesticides are applied, you must also know whether the pesticide is approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for general or restricted use.

STEP 1




KNOW THE REGULATIONS — AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER



General use pesticides are the most widely used and are readily available. These are the products that the average consumer can pick up at a hardware store, albeit in diluted concentrations. Restricted use pesticides are available only to certified professionals for controlling the most severe infestations. The EPA carefully regulates their registration, labeling, and application.

EPA compliance with the use of restricted pesticides remains a vital concern. You certainly don't want to risk a citation or loss of business license due to a violation. All the more reason to make sure you are clearly and consistently documenting the pesticides your company uses, and cross-checking them against approved chemicals. Approved chemicals vary by state, so be sure you are intimately familiar with your own state's regulations.

A quick review of cases showing violations of The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (*FIFRA*) makes it clear that transgressions can cost tens of thousands of dollars in fines and penalties, and even result in suspensions outright. *For example:*

-  **In Oregon, one company was fined more than \$50,000 for using outdated labeling on its pesticide products**
-  **Also in Oregon, the federal government filed charges against a pest control company whose illegal use of pesticides led to the death of a homeowner**
-  **In Arizona, a pest control company's improper production of a pesticide led to a fine by the federal government, and could have landed the company in more serious trouble with its state regulator**

Make sure you are clearly and consistently documenting the pesticides your company uses.

STEP 1

KNOW THE REGULATIONS — AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER

In most cases, violations such as those cited above are the result of actions taken by employees who either didn't have or didn't follow their training, and supervisors who weren't paying close enough attention. Although requirements vary by state, training isn't optional. Techs on your staff must have completed about three months of course work, then pass a written exam.

Many states also require that licensed techs earn a certain number of continuing education credits each year in order to maintain their certification. It's vital, therefore, that you not rely solely on a tech's license as proof that he or she is qualified to work for your company, and doing the job well.

Your employees are required to complete detailed reports on what they are applying, so be sure that you are paying attention to that paperwork. In addition to being required, those documents provide important insight into what your techs are doing throughout the day, and can serve as one basis for your conversations with them.







STEP 2

HIRE QUALIFIED STAFF, AND TRAIN THEM PROPERLY



For your company to succeed, however, your employees must do much more than what's minimally required by regulation. Today, perhaps more than ever, consumers are knowledgeable and concerned about their exposure to anything that strikes them as "unnatural," including harsh chemical pesticides, so your techs need to be comfortable talking in laymen's terms about every product they use.

So that means hiring staff who have both technical know-how and the so-called soft skills of customer relationship management. According to researchers at MyMajors.com, which analyzes the skills and attributes individuals need to succeed professionally, the best pest control technicians possess **a wide range of competencies, including:**

-  **Critical thinking**, the ability to logically evaluate problems and weigh solutions against one another
-  **Time management**, because your techs must work efficiently to service all of your customers
-  **Effective speaking and writing**, because techs must be able to communicate clearly with customers, regulators, and you
-  **Active Listening**, a crucial element of effective communication. Techs who fail to pay close attention to what property owners tell them about their pest problems and treatment preferences may not have the information necessary to solve the problem

Techs also need the technical know-how in chemistry, of course, and must be cooperative, dependable, able to tolerate stress, and function with a high level of integrity.

STEP 2

HIRE QUALIFIED STAFF, AND TRAIN THEM PROPERLY



So, in addition to ensuring that your techs have the proper applicator training and certification, they must also receive instruction on customer relationship management. It's best to pair your new techs with seasoned veterans, so they can train their new colleague on how your company handles customer communications, and be sure they're handling their chemicals correctly.

Make sure your employees communicate with customers

When you fail to fully and clearly explain everything the homeowner needs to know about products being applied in their home — including what the product is, how it works, how long it will be active, all potential risks to human or animal health, everything the homeowner should do to mitigate those risks, and any available alternatives — the results can catastrophic, for both your customer and your business.

Take **the story** of one Washington, D.C.-area woman who suffered extreme health problems immediately after a pest control technician sprayed a flea treatment in her home. During months of recuperation, she researched the chemical that had been used.

“First I found the pesticide label online, with its information about using the product properly,” she wrote in *The Washington Post*. “What this told me was that the technician had not given me enough information. The label instructs users to cover all food-processing surfaces, utensils and exposed food prior to spraying. We hadn't been told to do anything like that.”

She detailed other mistakes that the technician made in both the application of the product and his communication about the product to her — mistakes egregious enough to cost a pest control company thousands of dollars and to expose it to a big liability risk.

STEP 2

HIRE QUALIFIED STAFF, AND TRAIN THEM PROPERLY











And while it's important to be fully transparent about the possible negative effects of products you're using, it's just as necessary to manage customer expectations.

Not every treatment works the first time. And even if it does, some pests can easily return, especially if property owners aren't educated about how to do their part in preventing reoccurrences. For example, most people know that keeping a clean home is an important step in preventing bugs and rodents. But most don't know that moisture also attracts pests, so fixing a leaky faucet and making sure downspouts direct water away from the home, are important actions for the homeowner to take as well.

How effectively do your techs communicate?

The U.S. EPA recommends that consumers should not hire a pest control company that doesn't detail a pest control plan. *That plan should include:*

-  Pests to be controlled
-  Extent of the problem
-  Active ingredient(s) in the pesticide chosen
-  Potential adverse health effects and typical symptoms of poisoning associated with the active ingredients
-  Form of the pesticide and application techniques
-  Non-chemical alternatives available
-  Special instructions to reduce the property owner's exposure to the pesticide
-  Steps to take to minimize pest problems in the future

STEP 2

HIRE QUALIFIED STAFF, AND TRAIN THEM PROPERLY

Make sure your techs are providing all of this information, plus cost estimates, in writing. Have the customer sign this document to confirm their receipt. And be aware that today's health-minded consumers will still have plenty of questions, *including*:

- 🔗 What's known about the health effects of exposure to the substance you propose to use, especially to kids?
- 🔗 Will it hurt my pets?
- 🔗 Will I have to leave my home?
- 🔗 Should I throw away all my food?
- 🔗 For how long will the substance be active or potent in my home or garden?
- 🔗 What natural or non-chemical treatments might be available instead?



STEP 3

COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY









Sustaining ongoing contact with employees in the field is a big part of any business that's always on the move. You should meet with each of your techs regularly — once a week is best — to review their experiences on the job.

Review all the reports they have filed prior to those conversations. In addition to detailed pest control plans and summaries of treatments they provided at each customer site, those documents should also include brief customer satisfaction surveys that your techs should be administering to customers at the end of each service appointment.

Have a list of questions ready for staff during each of these conversations.

These might include:

-  What was the highlight of your week, and why?
-  What was the most difficult thing you dealt with this week?
-  What surprised you this week?
-  Were any of your customers particularly challenging to deal with? How did you handle it?
-  Tell me about any difficult pest-management issues that you this handled this week.
-  Was there anything you confronted this week that you felt under-prepared for?

In short, your conversations should focus on both the technical side of your techs' work, as well as the people-management side.

Ongoing contact with employees in the field is a big part of any business that's always on the move.

STEP 4

MAKE IT EASIER ON YOUR TECHS BY GOING DIGITAL



In the past, one of the most difficult aspects of managing mobile pest-control employees has been the sheer volume of paperwork that they generate. But today you can maintain electronic versions of all the critical documents they need on smart phones or tablets. This lets you take command of just about every data point in a service cycle, and easily capture detailed information that can improve everything from **pest-control plan development** to compliance with **EPA rules on pesticide storage** to accurate billing.

The days of a technician having to keep a file box of essential forms in his van are over; everything can be accessed, updated, and saved electronically to a centralized database, making management infinitely easier. That makes it easier for your techs to complete necessary documents while relieving them of the burden of having to keep track of paperwork themselves.

Consider, for example, the typical series of pest control plans and reports a technician or supervisor is charged with maintaining. The traditional approach might be to pull out a paper file for each of these required documents, sit behind the steering wheel with a clipboard, and complete each page by hand. Some techs might even wait until they were back at the home office and make that paperwork an end-of-day (*or worse, wait-until-tomorrow*) priority.

Now, however, a company manager can give techs a suite of mobile apps, specifically tailored to the information management needs of your company.

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STEP 4

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Integrated pest management strategies are key

Today, dealing with unwanted pests means a lot more than simply spraying poison or setting traps. Integrated pest management strategies have become the cornerstone of the business. These strategies detail not only the plan for eradicating pests, but also for preventing their return.

It makes sense that technology should stay in-step with that strategy, and even improve its execution. Any solid pest control pro knows that implementing an effective **integrated pest management** strategy is going to differ from pest to pest. That's why you should **have a good checklist to help select the right pest-specific strategy**, and then make sure you follow it to the letter can save time and keep efforts on target.

Make your employees—and company—tech-savvy

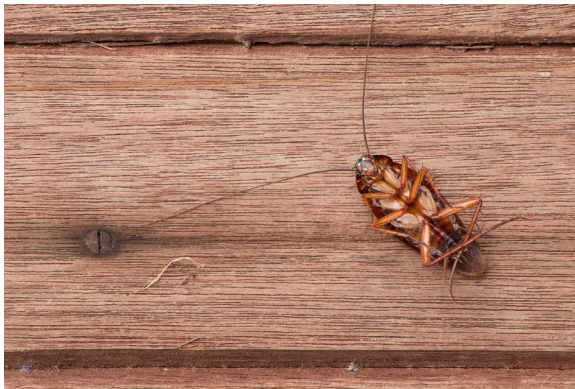
Electronic records management is also an important part of your communication with your techs — and their communication with customers. You can more easily recall and review your techs' documentation when those documents are stored electronically, and you can both review key documents together during your conversations.

And when your tech is on site at a customer's property, he or she can easily use a phone or tablet to easily retrieve all of that customer's records. That makes it simple for the tech to remind the customer of what's been done so far and what still needs to be done, while at the same time entering any new information.

Finally, be sure that your staff is delivering **invoices** to your customers at the time of service appointment. And **as we've explained previously**, while it's your option to accept payment later, there's really no reason that your techs can't process payment on the spot.

STEP 4

MAKE IT EASIER ON YOUR TECHS BY GOING DIGITAL



You're already ready

Think about the number of employees you have who are already use smartphones and tablets for personal use. **As noted in PMP just last year**, “The National Small Business Association’s (NSBA’s) recent survey on technology usage found... 74 percent of small-business owners use a smartphone, up from 57 percent in 2010.” It just makes sense that you take advantage of a booming trend in technological usage to better run your pest-control company, improve worker performance, and optimize profitability.

Today’s business based mobile apps, whether ready-made or custom-built for your specific needs, are giving pest control pros unprecedented control over everything from schedule coordination to chemical compliance concerns to customer billing and outreach. Canvas offers 220 mobile apps **specific to the pest control industry**, each one designed to eliminate excess paperwork and provide a more effective means of workforce management. You can **try any or all of them** for free for a full 30 days — plenty of time to see what kind of impact an optimized mobile workforce can have on your business.

Canvas offers 220 mobile apps specific to the pest control industry... try any or all of them for free for a full 30 days.

[Try It Free](#)

GET STARTED TODAY!

Try It Free

No credit card required



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