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Education: As important for customers as employees

By **JOHN CULOTTA**

When a homeowner hires a professional, they assume they are assured complete eradication of the bed bugs or termites plaguing their homes. This is why many pest management insurance claims occur when



homeowners discover a pest control treatment has been ineffective on the first try.

Despite this reality, pest management companies do not always pay enough attention to communicating with customers in a way that helps ensure realistic expectations. Education—of both employees and customers—is a critical tool for reducing these claims.

The “soft skills” that allow technicians to provide great customer service do not come naturally to everyone. Much of the training PMPs receive necessarily focuses on techniques and using the proper chemicals for eradicating pests, not customer service. But managers can work with technicians to improve their communication skills and encourage them to spend more time educating the customer. If a PMP explains to a customer that a particular pest control issue may take multiple treatments, the customer is unlikely to be angry when they do not see the problem rectified after one treatment.

For example, when using termite baiting stations, it is very important to discuss with the customer how the baiting process works, what’s involved in the treatment and the potential length of time that may be required to eliminate the colony.

It can be helpful to supplement these conversations with written information. Pest management companies have enthusiastically embraced social media, and many are using these channels to provide educational resources aimed at a homeowner audience, such as information on

emerging pests in a particular area.

These resources can be more than marketing tools—they can help you manage your customers' expectations around pest management. During a consultation, share resources that can help the average home or business owner understand the realities of pest management: handouts detailing pest behavior; tips on habits to reduce pests in the home or business; and maintenance checklists for preventing pest invasions.

When faced with potential risks and exposure to claims, many business owners simply think, “that’s why I have insurance,” and forget about critical issues until they have to file a claim. But if a business has enough claims and costly losses, they may find insurance coverage more expensive and hard to come by. That’s why it’s worth it to manage customer expectations: not only will you have a happier, more loyal customer, but you may be able to save money in the long run.

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