

Hard nosed business relies on local software

Many people confuse the terms, "regimentation" and "discipline" and tend to use one when they mean the other.

Simon Dixon, owner and technical director of Melbourne based Exopest, understands the difference and knows which philosophy he values most highly: strive for excellence.

Exopest was formed in July 1985

when four pest managers, Simon Dixon, Laurie Agan, Bob Rennie and Greg Donnison, left Antipest (formerly Rentokil) to strike out on their own.

From a humble, capital starved beginning focussing on fumigation in Bertie Street, Port Melbourne, Exopest, now owned totally by Simon Dixon, has grown to now employ a

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Partnership in action:
Temissoft's Kevork Temisgian (left) with Exopest's CEO, Simon Dixon and office manager, Melissa Laurie.

staff of 18 handling commercial and domestic business right across the greater Melbourne area.

A number of factors contribute towards the uniqueness of Exopest but Simon and his team's insistence on operational and service excellence and strict operational procedures are probably the standouts.

Testimony to the high standards they set for themselves is the fact that four of Exopest's field staff – Simon, Silvio Parisi, John Pannuzzo, and Brett Forsberg – are university graduates, and all technicians hold either Certificate III or IV in Pest Management.

Part and parcel of the Exopest approach to quality is its insistence on documented planning, operational management and reporting.

To make sure that it keeps totally on top of things, Exopest exploits the latest in advanced computer technology, both hardware and software.

While Simon acknowledges that the greatest repository of business management software exists overseas, principally in the USA, he is far happier working with and relying on a tried and tested home-grown product.

And, so he should. He and his team have become major contributors of ideas for the development and customisation of Temissoft's ServicePRO suite of purpose-designed software for the pest management industry.

"We first became involved with Temissoft's founder and CEO, Kevork Temisgian, over eight years ago, before Kevork had really kicked his company off", Simon said.

"Right from day one, what impressed us was Kevork's and his team's preparedness to become truly involved and engaged in our business, like another business partner.



"And Temissoft has never let us down. Whenever we have needed them, they have always been there for us, to help us work through issues and challenges as our business and its needs have grown and their ServicePRO software has developed and adapted."

"They are much more than just a supplier. They are true consultants, who work with our team to ensure that not only their software, but also our hardware, support and complement our business operations and development."

"Importantly, ServicePRO software underpins and, to a large extent, actually drives our self imposed discipline. It also is an essential element for our customer's service and, as it and hardware technologies continue to develop, will become even more vital."

Bar coding used

Exopest uses ServicePRO software in a number of ways, employing: Report Writer (using RAPID Solutions' paperwork templates); Scheduler, to make and coordinate technicians' job bookings; and Bar Coder, especially to monitor and help manage its termite and rodent baiting jobs.

"Our selection of Ensyslex's Exterra termite monitoring and baiting system was made on the same basis as our selection of ServicePRO," Simon said.

"Simply, it was a case of quality and support."

"With ServicePRO to help us, we are able to keep right on top of where all our jobs and scheduled follow-up inspections are up to and using the bar code scanning facility, we can provide a whole new quality to our reporting."

"The bar coding is transformed to a schedule so, after the technician has been there and done the scheduled inspections and checked all the baits, it also means you don't miss baits."

"If you have 15 stations laid out at a particular house and 12 at another house and three at another, the ServicePRO bar coding and scanning system simply won't allow you to finish it until they are all checked."

"It makes you do the work. It's quality control. It imposes a discipline. Simon also employs ServicePRO bar coding software to provide commercial clients with trend analyses of rodent and insect pest monitoring."

"We have been using Kework's software and hardware technology to take our pest management service to that next level, especially for major national food companies."

"Taking the data from our handheld scanners we can produce meaningful graphs and flow charts, and that's fantastic."

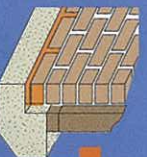
"And, for our part, we can know exactly what is happening with each customer."

Despite the close relationship which exists between Exopest and Temissoft, none of the decision making was ever taken for granted.

"In fact, they have always given me a hard time," Kework said.

"Simon and his team are acutely aware of what they need and relate everything back to customer and company benefits. They want to know exactly what the pay off is before they will go with a new module or idea."

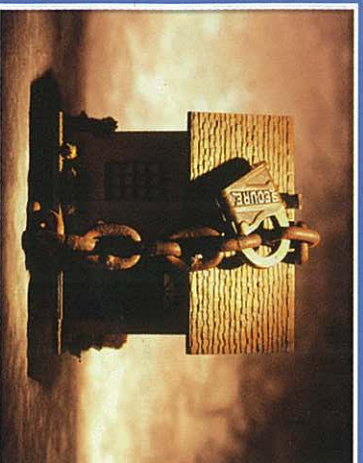
"But, then, once they are convinced it will pay off, for them and their customers, they embrace it and milk it for all it's worth. >



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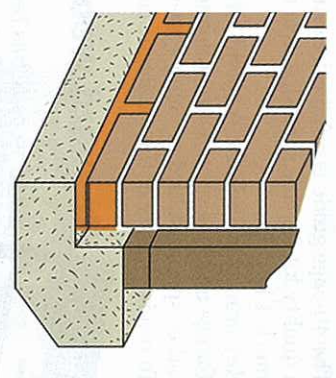
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▽ "Exopest is one of those companies that looks for value at the end of the line, and for whom discipline is everything," he said.

Nothing left to chance

Even with the help of Temissoft's ServicePRO software, Simon Dixon takes nothing for granted and leaves nothing to chance.

"For instance, we don't allow technicians to write their reports in the field and send them straight out. All reports to customers have to come back here to the office and go through what amounts to two QA checks," Simon said.

He said both of his main office staff downstairs have undertaken courses and refresher courses conducted by RAPID Solutions.

"So they know about termites. And, they know about science.

"So, it is not just the technicians who are trained. The office staff is also trained.

"And, now, with the flexibility of ServicePRO Report Writer, they can write in extra notes about photos.

"There is no use in just popping in a photo and saying 'sub floor'. Cathy types away downstairs and tells them what could be in the sub floor ... trying to add the personal touch.

"We have adapted and enhanced

and built on the framework that ServicePRO has given us. We add the human side, and the knowledge and bring it all together," he said.

Simon said digital cameras have revolutionised Exopest reporting.

"If a customer phones up, we can tell them, just go to page four and look and photo number three, and we can talk about it with them," he said.

All Exopest technicians say they are really looking forward to using ServicePRO software remote wireless technology with hand helds in the field.

"But our reports will still have to come back to the office to be checked. We don't allow it to go straight out. It has to be audited," Simon said.

The system is also used for business and operational monitoring.

"For instance, the on-screen diaries where you can line up all your technicians and staff, including Peter and myself, we are all on there. You can just click on whatever part of the screen you need to get all the information you want about who is doing what, when and for how long," Simon said. "All it takes is a few seconds."

"We also use ServicePRO to measure all our productivity ... of all of us. In the Report Writing section, there are many areas you can call up and analyse productivity per technician



Simon Dixon: stickler for quality.

and per job.

"And, you can see how many jobs you are doing of that description."

While Exopest uses MYOB for its financial accounting, all invoices are generated out of ServicePRO.

"ServicePRO also connects and works in fantastically with MYOB to make, what for us, is a seamless system," Simon said.

"And, as soon as a customer rings in for a booking, Schedule gives it to the technician, they will invoice it, and that job, say a termite inspection, will become a reminder next year. And we start the circle again," he said. ■

Sorex bird management catalogue

Sorex International's Network 2007 bird management catalogue is now available. It provides a comprehensive guide to all the tools necessary for effective bird proofing systems.

The 40-page guide is a full colour and illustrated companion to equip professionals with quality kit for this specialist arm of pest control, in which Sorex International are the market leaders.

Key brands include the Avipoint bird spikes and the Network Bird range of nets, net fixings and bird wire. The catalogue also includes traps, scaring devices, cleaning products and other specialist bird proofing systems.

To receive a copy of the catalogue call Globe or email: sales@globeaustralia.com.au.

Roguard website

A new website has been launched by Sorex International to make it easier for professional pest managers to select, personalise and order rodent bait boxes.

According to Sorex product manager, Sylvie Morton, the user-friendly website www.roguard.com features rat and mouse cartoons to showcase the key features of the Roguard range including Roguard Xtra, Elite, Forte and Mouse Box.

Ms Morton said a range of accessories is also featured, together with a special personalisation service.

"Our website underlines the balance that needs to be struck between safety and efficacy," she said. "The boxes may be personalised to enhance a company image and promote repeat business.

"Examples can be viewed on the website and with a fast service and minimum orders not as high as you might think, they can be a very cost-effective marketing tool," Ms Morton said. For more information contact Globe Australia.

