

A Higher View Point

By Roger Henson, Southwest Training and Consulting

While hiking to the summit of a 14,000-foot peak in Colorado, I was thinking of a friend and his family who were at home in Houston deciding what to do as Hurricane Harvey was approaching. He had decided to ride it out. Then the waters came up the street and they found themselves getting into a boat that came up their driveway. As he said, "We were lucky that volunteers were looking for people who decided to stay put." In the end, water in the house caused the expected flooding damage and a few feet of drywall has to be removed from the entire first floor of the house. And of course all floor coverings will have to be replaced. His is one of countless stories coming from those who live along the coasts in Texas and Florida.

Even though the high country was not concerned with hurricanes, I gazed across the landscape where there was a distinct haze from wildfires burning across the West.

There is an old saying: "Everybody talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it." This September we are certainly talking about the weather and its destructive forces and how to prepare if you are in the path of the storm. Americans from everywhere are doing something to help.

Many years ago when I was a Service Operations Manager in Massachusetts we had a major blizzard, The Blizzard of '78 (40-50 inches of snow). As a fairly new regional manager, I had lots of decisions to make, such as when to close the office so employees could get home, what to do about the pending service calls, how to communicate (in the days before cell phones), and so many more questions from employees and customers. I had no manual to rely on, only my experiences, values and common sense as I made the calls and answered the questions. It was one of those times when I chose to let the people closest to the action make many of the decisions. In the end I stayed in the office till I closed it. It took me six hours to get home, but some technicians slept in their cars that night, as they were not willing to leave an assignment until the equipment was fixed. Half the state was closed for four days, and thousands of cars were abandoned as state officials slowly plowed out the roadways. As the news cameras moved to the next "big" story we had to make more decisions on pay for the time people could not get to work, deciding our priorities regarding our customers, monitoring damaged company vehicles and communicating with the employees, who were dealing with personal problems with their homes.

A part of an editorial from *The Boston Globe*:

"The storm of February 6 was uniquely harsh, and it taught us lessons, to unprepared government and foolhardy people with unique severity. The human will that conquered the storm, or rather endured it and faced up to the aftermath was not unique.

As always when mankind is tested by nature, decency and selflessness prevailed. Strangers saved each other's lives and parted without even knowing the others' names. Policemen and firemen and bureaucrats struggled without sleep. Homeowners along the highways took in the stranded. Restless families obeyed emergency laws and kept their cars off the roads. Against the catastrophes of nature, we have to be sensible to wait and endure. But, remembering proudly our endurance, we must prepare ourselves better for those we may face in the future."

From that experience early in my management career I developed a real appreciation for having preparation and contingency plans, knowing that we cannot control the weather but must deal with its effects. Years later when I was the Operations Manager for Texas and Oklahoma I again was confronted with issues of hurricanes and tornadoes as a part

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of the responsibilities in a large service organization. Preparation was vital, but sometimes when the tornado just blew through Fort Worth one afternoon there was no time for tactical maneuvers. It was the part of the overall strategic planning that you put into action and then made the moment-to-moment decisions as the questions arose. Being a part of a national organization gave me opportunities to share a lot of best practices as someone somewhere was dealing with issues caused by Mother Nature.

What about us? There are many stories within our NASM family; do you have one that might help someone else? Send us your lessons to be learned and learning to be shared when decency and selflessness prevail.

Roger Henson
RHensonDFW@aol.com

Why Emphasizing Technical Skills is Critical in Field Service

By Bruce Breedon, VP of Field Service Operations,
Fairbanks Scales



Competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness in field service depend on constant skill development and are measured by operational outcomes. At Fairbanks, we utilize the Field Service7 field service engineer development program to balance Field-Service Engineer (FSE) development and align skill to outcomes.

The concept of the Field Service7 program is to maximize FSE impact and contribution to the company's goals. One of the seven areas of focus is technical skills, which is what I'll be discussing in this column.

It has long been proven and often cited that today's FSEs require soft skills to enhance company brand equity, customer relationships, and revenue. I couldn't agree more and we are often tempted to say, "Provide me someone with the soft skills, and we will train them on the technology." I've spoken those words myself, but the reality is that technology skills encompass far more than just training an FSE or field technician on the product and the service tasks.

In my book, *The Intentional Field Service Engineer*, I position technical skills as the foundation for an FSE to maximize their performance. I still truly believe an FSE is required to be a technologist; however, technical proficiency is just one aspect of technical skills.

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Why Emphasizing Technical Skills is Critical in Field Service

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Over the years as an FSE and later as a service executive, I observed that the best or “intentional” FSEs stood out from others because of their technical skill. While they were very strong technically, they didn’t stand out just because they got “As” in their technical subjects or product service training — in fact it was sometimes to the contrary. Those FSEs differentiated themselves on a technical level based on a unique blend of skill attributes relative to the service call assigned, including:

- Organization
- Listening
- Preparation
- Having a correct perception of their value and responsibility

Our opportunity as service business leaders lies in training FSEs technically, while also leading them to acquire the attributes above. This can be accomplished through an engagement practice that identifies a standard and integrates knowledge networks, micro-learning, experiences, and objectives/measurements to help achieve that standard.

The Field Service7 program addresses both soft skills and job skills, commonly applied to customer relationships and sales ability. I would like to emphasize that the technical attributes I mentioned — organization, call preparation, listening, and perception of value and responsibility — are examples of soft skills. But these specific soft skills are crucial to being a good technologist, and are the first pillar of what we identify as being an “Intentional Field Service Engineer.”

High-performing FSEs prepare well for all service tasks — knowing the product, the assigned service task, the account, and the customer background. They certainly don’t just figure it all out after they get on-site. Pre-call preparations are key to being organized, prepared, and confident. Do you think a customer can tell whether your company brand ambassador is organized, prepared, and confident to solve their problem?

Listening is key to troubleshooting and even to scheduled preventative maintenance. I believe listening isn’t just a proper troubleshooting element, but also a sign of gratefulness and respect. Certainly an FSE who is polite and practices deliberate listening has the advantage in properly approaching troubleshooting and not going down errant pathways, while also earning the respect of the customer.

FSEs today are quite challenged with responsibility for many product lines, product age, varying model types, and technology platforms — many FSEs even across multiple brands. Reference material, calibrated test equipment, Internet links to resources and technical sites/programs are critical preparation steps. Like spare parts, the FSE needs to ensure she/he is organized, up-to-date, and connected to master the technical skill. Today’s FSEs may need 24/7 access to technical training videos for both pre-training and on-site access. Virtual/augmented reality resources are yet another pre-call step to ensure on-site connectivity and access.

To maximize the customer experience and FSE effectiveness, technical skills with supporting soft skill attributes are the basis of a quality FSE and the foundational step of the Field Service7 development program.

Articles for NASM Newsletter

NASM publishes the newsletter quarterly.

Please submit articles/ information to Ken Cook, Ken Cook Co. (kenc@kencook.com).

Deadlines are:
November 15
for the December issue
February 15
for the March issue
May 15
for the June issue
August 15
for the September issue

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What’s on Your Reading List

Please take a moment to think about what you’ve read lately that would be of interest to your fellow NASM members. Be sure to include the complete title, author’s name, a brief book overview and where it’s available. Send your recommendations to kenc@kencook.com and we’ll include them in subsequent newsletters.

New Director for 2017

Ken Kreuzer



I am a very hard worker, am results driven, am an excellent communicator and a problem solver. With my background in marketing and my experience in sales, I am very much at ease speaking with corporate buyers, consumers or in front of large audiences. My technical side allows me to answer questions or look for solutions that solve the customer's problems. I am adaptable and eagerly face any challenge placed before me. There is always a better way to perform tasks, and I enjoy being part of a world-class organization. I have taken my skill set to the next level by becoming a Certified Service Executive, providing more knowledge, better decision-making skills and improving my management training. I have led large projects from start to finish, under budget and within the timeframe. I have been an active member in the New Product Development (NPD) process, led and participated in Total Quality Management (TQM) teams. I have trained an exceptional team, developed new training initiatives and implemented new software to facilitate warranty expense reduction.

Director of Specialty Products

Everidge
May 2017 – Present
Plymouth, MN

Specialty product specialist, new product development.

Service Manager

ThermalRite/CrownTonka
May 2013 – Apr 2017
Watertown, WI

I was the Global Service Manager for ICS, CrownTonka and ThermalRite. I built a new service department structure and rolled out the new FasNet service network in January 2014.

Director of Global Support

ACP Solutions, Inc.
May 2012 – Jan 2013
Cedar Rapids, Iowa Area

I provided global service support for the commercial microwave industry. I actively trained the sales personnel, developed the train the trainer program and was involved with major chain accounts.

Director of Technical Service

Alto-Shaam, Inc.
May 1999 – May 2012
Menomonee Falls, WI

I started as technical support, moved to Service Manager and then to Director of Technical Service. I held the position of Western and Canadian Regional Service Manager. I was part of the national sales team and worked on large projects from conception to inception. I developed a comprehensive training program, including the design and buildout of the technical training facility at the factory. I led service teams in the field to correct and upgrade products in place, both domestically and internationally. I instituted the Factory Authorized Service Team (FASTEAM) concept, developed and wrote the policy manual for the department and led the parts team to double-digit sales increases for nine years. Through warranty control, I maintained warranty rates under 2% of sales.

Welcome New Member

Joshua Bobzien, Montage Furniture Service

2017 Events

Note: Dates and locations are subject to change.

NASM 2017 Business / Board Meeting Schedule*:

Business/Board meetings are monthly teleconferences (1-800-630-9030, pass code 4616060#), unless otherwise noted. Typical meeting dates are scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of each month, starting at 10:00 a.m. central.

October 24, 2017 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

November 28, 2017 10:00 a.m. (cdt)

* With some exceptions, there will be face-to-face meetings that coincide with other NASM events. The face-to-face meetings will have available phone-in to the teleconference for those unable to attend.

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Ken Cook Co.

9929 W. Silver Spring Dr. • Milwaukee, WI 53225
Telephone - (414) 466-6060 • Fax - (414) 466-0840
E-mail - info@kencook.com • Web - www.kencook.com

NASM • P.O. Box 250796, Milwaukee, WI 53225 • Telephone: 414.466.6060, press 7 for NASM Fax: 414.466.0840 • www.nasm.com

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Brian Stringer
Manager – Technical Support
John Deere Construction and Forestry
Division
John Deere Dubuque Works
18600 S. John Deere Rd.
Dubuque, IA 52001
Tel: 563/589-6278
E-mail: stringerbrians@johndeere.com

Vice President

Greg Swiderski
Global Director, Technical Development
Komatsu Mining Corp. Group
4107 W Orchard Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215
Tel: 414/671-7490
E-mail: greg.swiderski@mining.komatsu.com

Secretary

Ken Kreuzscher, CSE
Director of Specialty Products
Everidge
156700 37th Avenue North
Plymouth, MN 55446
Tel: 920/545-5145
E-mail: kenk@crowntonka.com

Treasurer

Kenneth J. Cook
President and CEO
Ken Cook Co.
9929 W. Silver Spring Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53225
Tel: 414/466-6060 x200
Fax: 414/466-9275
E-mail: kencoock@kencook.com

Chairperson Finance Committee

Past President

Walt Gasparovic
President
The Gasparovic Group, Inc.
1655 N. Belmont Court
Arlington Heights, IL 60004
Tel: 888/818-3131
Web: www.gasparovic.com
E-mail: wgasparovic@gasparovic.com

Directors

Dion Zigler, CSM
Service Manager
Jerry Pate Turf & Irrigation
301 Schubert Drive
Pensacola, FL 32504
Tel: 850/479-4653
E-mail: dzigler@jerrypate.com

John Beel
Fixed Operations Director
K.C. Summers, Inc.
117 South 19th Street
Mattoon, IL 61938
Tel: 217/234-8863
E-mail: john_beel@kcsummers.com

Patrick Smith, CSM
Manager, Service Systems
The Toro Company
8111 Lyndale Ave., South
Bloomington, MN 55420
Tel: 952/887-8226
E-mail: patrick.smith@toro.com

Terry Ditsch
VP Product Service
Echo Incorporated
400 Oakwood Road
Lake Zurich, IL 60047
Tel: 847/550-2123
E-mail: terry_ditsch@echo-usa.com

Steve Meyer
Director of Marketing & Sales
Almon, Inc.
W223 N797 Saratoga Drive
Waukesha, WI 53186
Tel: 262/548-1360
E-mail: smeyer@almoninc.com

Legal Counsel

Alfred C. Lutz, Esquire, LCSE
Legal Counsel, NASM
314 S. 7th Street, #190
Klamath Falls, OR 97601
Tel: 530/398-4143
E-mail: alutz2010@gmail.com

Visit www.nasm.com



P.O. Box 250796
Milwaukee, WI 53225-6512