

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Don't ignore this revolution

Buckle up folks, we're in the front-end of a communication revolution that will change the world as we know it. As they say — "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

Friends, there's no overstating the impact that ever-more-incredible advances in communication technology are making in our society, our personal lives and in the way we operate our businesses.

Email. Cellular phones. Instant messaging. Hand-held computers. These are today's best production and sales tools. Learn to use them. We don't have a choice. Either ride the crest of the tidal surge of this revolution or be tumbled along in its froth.

Everyone's got one now

The cell phone, a curiosity just a few years ago, is now considered a business necessity. It allows owners and managers to talk to or trade information with their employees, clients, vendors and . . . "Yes, dear I'll pick up some milk on the way home."

That's just the start. The newest generation of electronics are literally portable offices that have more utility than yesterday's room full of phones, faxes and file cabinets — all in a package that you attach to a clip on your belt. Amazingly, they allow you to access the Internet, communicate, schedule your week's activities and even take and send images.

This causes me to recall an interview in 1985 with a California lawn care business owner who saw the direction service delivery industries had to go. I remember the meeting well because I was so impressed with his "state-of-the-art" system.

This owner equipped his fleet of 22 service trucks — white pickup trucks, as I recall — with mobile radios he had purchased from the '84 Los Angeles

Olympics. Each time a technician made a service call, he called in the client's address, the time of the stop, the nature of the treatment, the type and amount of product he used, any payment he received and other data I've since forgotten.

A young woman in company headquarters received the information over her two-way radio and immediately inputted the data. Meanwhile, sales people in an adjacent room made cold calls to properties in the immediate vicinity of the technician, offering one-time specials and drumming up additional sales opportunities.

Did his technicians feel uncomfortable about calling in every stop, every treatment, every correspondence with a client? Not at all, he said. They loved the system because it allowed them to be more responsive to clients, treat more properties and, ultimately, earn better wages than technicians at competing companies.

Today's ongoing (and accelerating) communication revolution provides us with incredible access to other people, including our employees and our clients.

Let's learn to use these new tools to offer more responsive service. We owe it to ourselves, our employees and our customers.

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Today's communication tools give us instant access to clients, employees, each other.

