

Adding pipe-lining services can enhance a plumbing business

Contractors can add customers, increase revenue.



Most customers prefer pipe lining to traditional pipe repairs because pipe lining preserves their home or building, saving them money, time and hassle.

As Europe and America began installing sewers, drainage pipes and water mains in the 1800s, along came the rise of the plumber. Our industry has played a critical role in everyday life, sanitation and municipal functions for more than 200 years. But how have the technologies and tools developed with the passing time?

Since the beginning, contacting a plumber has been a service call no one wants to make. Inviting a plumber into one's home or place of work could mean tearing up the floor, opening up the walls, breaking ceiling panels, turning off the water, ripping out pipes and making the location inhabitable for days, weeks or months.

Pipe lining changes that.

Pipe lining (including various types of relining materials and applications such as cured-in-place pipe, pipe restoration and epoxy coatings) was brought to North America around

the 1980s and has since gained momentum. After first being predominantly used by public works contractors, these noninvasive pipe rehabilitation methods evolved to offer in-place restoration into both the private sectors and other public sectors. It is being used in all types of properties, from skyscrapers to houses, historical properties to deepwater oil and gas platforms.

These new methods of restoring pipes in-place are innovative, modern improvements to the plumbing industry. Pipe lining's influence is just starting to take effect.

The world of pipe lining is a \$15 billion industry, according to IBISWorld (www.tinyurl.com/pipeline-report), listing 3,600 businesses in the industry.

What does this mean for you? It means pipe lining can be a lucrative, effective, practical, increasingly popular and overall rewarding service to offer to customers.

A wide spectrum of benefits helps nudge private- and public-side customers toward choosing pipe lining over traditional repair methods. These factors include little to no plumbing system downtime, minimal to no destruction on the property, no tenant or resident displacement, fast project turnaround time, greatly reduced construction noises, extended plumbing system lifespan, curtailed waste for landfills and considerable savings for building owners.

While the pipe-lining industry has felt a steady increase in interest throughout the years, we feel it is important to inform the public, elected officials and utilities that alternatives to pipe replacements are available. When a repipe will jeopardize the structure or foundation of a building, stop business operations or increase a renovation's cost tenfold — pipe lining is an alternative.

With the recent focus on the effects of lead leaching, attention has turned to reliable cost-effective ways to address the problem. Pipe-lining technologies have proven effective at bringing lead and copper leaching into compliance with the EPA lead and copper cut-off levels. The use of in-place lining for the reduction of lead leaching can be completed with minimal excavation on the public side and in many cases with no excavation on the private (customer's) side. Advances in lining technology means that pipes can be lined, cured and ready to return to service in a matter of minutes, not days.

One such pipe-lining technology and installation company is ACE DuraFlo with its patented ePIPE epoxy coating process. This business not only installs patented pipe-lining solutions, but also sells the technology to plumbing companies and utility service providers. Representatives at ACE DuraFlo find it rewarding to help dozens of plumbing business owners increase

Photo credit: ACE DuraFlo

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their sales and customer base by adding pipe-lining solutions to their tool belt.

An example of this is one of its oldest and largest franchisees, TDT Plumbing, located in Houston.

Increase customer base

Adding pipe lining as a service to a business can create an influx of work and simultaneously help stabilize a company financially. While smaller plumbing projects can bring in anywhere from \$100 to \$2,000, pipe-lining projects can range from \$3,000 to \$500,000.

TDT Plumbing, a full-service plumbing contractor that does everything from pipe-leak investigations to water heater replacements, receives about 30% to 50% of its annual revenue from pipe-lining projects.

Contractors can increase business and maximize their customer base if their service list was extended to include pipe lining. This is especially helpful for plumbing businesses that are in smaller towns, face stiff competition or are eliminating outdated or nonapplicable services. When looking to fill a void, pipe lining is an ideal service to add. Other benefits include:

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- **Happy customers.** It's a simple concept: Give the customers what they want. Ever met any homeowners who are excited to have their home ripped up due to a repipe, or a building engineer who is happy to inform tenants of plumbing shutdowns? Tell a customer about the technology that brings pipes to a better-than-new condition without having to tear out the pipes and watch his face light up.

"The customers experience the biggest difference when comparing pipe lining to repiping," says **Gary Gould**, CEO of TDT Plumbing. "What the customer saves in headache, expensive cosmetic damages, convenience and overall cost are definitely what they like the best about pipe lining."

- **Opens the door to well-paying commercial projects.** Offering pipe-lining services can turn a small-town plumbing



Pipe-lining technologies such as ePIPE, used in this picture, reduces disruptions to normal business activity in commercial properties.

company into a business-to-business provider. Instead of buying advertising mailers for homeowners, salesmen could

available for other projects.

"We can make more revenue with fewer men, and that's the biggest benefit to us," Gould says.

- **The solution customers are looking for.** Due to the overwhelming benefits over traditional repipes, pipe lining is increasingly requested by homeowners, property managers, construction contractors and engineers.

"Pipe lining has become more and more well known," Gould says, explaining that his business' number of website inquiries and calls about pipe-lining solutions have continued to increase with time. "Pipe lining has kept us afloat. It's been real good for us."

Larry Gillanders is the co-founder of ACE DuraFlo Systems, the developer of patented ePIPE technologies, which is a leading company in the small diameter pipe-lining industry. He is also the CEO of Pipe Restoration Technologies and its subsidiaries, which are the businesses that install the pipe-lining technologies across North America. He has developed multilingual international technical programs for ePIPE, and is the director of pipe restoration services in the United Kingdom and director of ePIPE Espana in Spain. For more information, visit www.aceduraflo.com.

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