

PCO Profile

Jonathan Boyar, owner of fast-growing Boston company Ecologic Entomology.



FINDING BALANCE
BY PROVIDING

‘Ecologic’ Solutions

Jonathan Boyar and his team at Boston-based Ecologic Entomology have carved out a niche providing services with “the larger picture in mind.”

By Amy Newman Smith

“When I was 15 years old, I found myself before the Taunton [Mass.] City Council pleading a case for a safer alternative to the pesticide they were spraying to kill gypsy moth caterpillars,” recalled Jonathan Boyar, principal of Boston-based Ecologic Entomology. His paternal grandfather, Harry Lewis Boyar, had sparked an early interest in beekeeping, and “as a beekeeper, I knew their pesticide didn’t discriminate. Even as a kid, I knew that killing one destructive pest at the expense

of all the beneficial ones wasn’t ‘ecological,’” he said

As Boyar became known in the area as a beekeeper, he was called upon to remove hives from the walls of old barns and farmhouses. Inevitably, some of the calls asking if he could remove bees were from people who had misidentified the yellow and black insects plaguing them, mistaking wasps and hornets for honey bees. Boyar’s willingness to tackle the problem was the beginning of a small pest control business, with friends from school enlisted to work alongside him. Decades later, Boyar has built a thriving

pest control business focused on commercial multifamily housing. The company currently has 18 full-time employees and offices in Boston and Marion, Mass.

It’s a long way away from his high school business, but Boyar has stayed true to his idea of providing pest control in a manner that keeps the larger picture in mind. In talking about the rat problem that is currently a top concern in Boston, he takes a moment to note that rats aren’t just pests; they are animals that have been key to the development of many life-saving drugs.

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Boyar's team is trained in how to inspect, assess and diagnose problems so they can apply the most targeted pesticides in the most judicious way, rather than offering a quick and broad application of pesticides. Their most-used tools are their flashlights and vacuum cleaners, and they are not afraid to tell customers when there's a better way to deal with a problem.

"We are certainly not a mass-production pest control company. As a result, we do not quickly apply chemicals," the company promises on its website. It's an approach that customers appreciate, mentioning it in the five-star reviews of Ecologic Entomology, reviews that highlight the team's thoroughness, professionalism and deep knowledge. Many reviews also talk about how Ecologic Entomology succeeded in eliminating a pest problem that other pest control firms had failed to eradicate.

Boyar, who, along with his operations manager and lead service manager, holds A.C.E. certification, has found that investing time in diving deep into pest problems can pay off in more ways than one. He explained, "When bed bugs reemerged in the late 1990s, I made it a point to learn everything I could about bed bugs." When he felt secure that he knew just about everything there was to know on the subject, he began offering 90-minute seminars to property management companies and health departments.

"Just by virtue of me being out in public and doing a lot of public speaking about it, we attracted a

lot of business organically without advertising or marketing," he said. Despite the time commitments of his thriving business, Boyar continues to share his expertise, offering training in pest prevention and control for two public housing authorities and serving as an expert witness in cases between tenants and landlords that involve pest infestations. He even offers a free insect identification service for structural and urban insects. He regularly receives pictures of bugs in his inbox and dead bugs in plastic baggies in his mailbox.

provide an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to going above and beyond for their clients. "That's where we roll up our sleeves," Boyar said. "I really enjoy seeing the next big challenge like that. It's where we shine." For example, Ecologic Entomology has been contracted by property managers who have a court order to dispose of a unit's contents. Ecologic Entomology will handle the entire project, carefully wrapping the contents in plastic and removing them in a way that doesn't spread pests to other parts of the building.

Boyar credits close relationships with property managers for his company's success. With more than 40 years of experience in this sector, he has a good feel for their daily challenges and what they need from him to keep their residents happy. Ecologic prides itself on making sure every interaction with customers



Jonathan Boyar is a respected beekeeper in the Boston area. Because of his admiration for insects he and his team work to find non-pesticide solutions, whenever possible.

COMMERCIAL SUCCESS. With a focus on commercial multifamily housing, Ecologic Entomology sees some messy situations, such as high-level infestations in a residence with hoarding conditions. Tough jobs like this get the team excited because they

shows its commitment to two central values: integrity and transparency. While the firm takes time to see if a pest problem can be solved without toxins and has been quick to adopt alternative methods that don't involve pesticides, there are pest problems

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that simply can't be dealt with any other way. To make sure customers have full access to information on those pesticides, in 2021, Ecologic rolled out a web-based client portal. Its creation was spearheaded by the company's president, Ken Spencer. A friend of Boyar's since the fifth grade and one of the employees of his high school business, Spencer reconnected with his old friend after many years working in the distribution arm of Mazda Motors of America. He has been working alongside Boyar the past 20 years, first in sales at a company Boyar was part owner in, and

works hard to promote diversity in the workplace, including embracing LGBT rights. Ecologic Entomology is a certified LGBT-owned Business Enterprise (LGBTBE), has been recognized by the Governor of Massachusetts and the Boston Business Journal as a diverse business enterprise.

Boyar and his management team also believe these mottos must inform how they treat their customers and employees. "We have to take care of our own because they take care of our customers," Boyar said. Employees are offered a 401(k) retirement plan with company matching funds and



Joshua Wainwright, one of the valuable Ecologic Entomology service professionals.



Jonathan Boyar credits much of Ecologic Entomology's success to its dedicated team of service professionals and customer service representatives.

then at Ecologic when the two went out on their own in 2010. The portal Spencer launched lets clients access all reports, pay invoices online, report pest sightings, and access safety data sheets and product labels.

A FOCUS ON VALUES. If you could be a fly (or any other bug) on the wall in an Ecologic staff meeting, you'd hear two mottos being reiterated: "We always want to do the right thing" and "Integrity matters." This includes giving back to the community and taking a stand on social issues. The company

a "Cadillac" health insurance plan covered entirely by the company. Employees pay no premiums and Ecologic Entomology absorbs the year-to-year cost increases to the health plan.

COVID REINVENTION. When Boyar and Spencer worked up their business plan for Ecologic Entomology, they knew they wanted to offer their employees a four-day workweek. Still, they initially couldn't put it into practice as a new business focused on landing the next big client and

the next big project. But COVID provided the opportunity to step back and take a look at some big-picture issues. Spencer shut the door to his office, silenced his phone and got to work on the problem. He started by asking clients whether they would be willing to change their service days to keep their assigned technician. Then he met with each technician, from most senior to least, and determined whether they wanted to have Monday or Friday off. In the end, shifting to the four-day workweek was "surprisingly easy," Spencer said. Technicians now work four 10-hour days, and they have a day free to make medical appointments, set up dates to meet home repair people or just enjoy a three-day weekend. The change has been enthusiastically embraced. Whether it's having a day to get their kitchen painted or a schedule that lets them leave Thursday afternoon for a weekend camping trip, the change has improved the quality of life for employees.

"We're not trying to take over the world," Boyar said. "We don't want to be the biggest company in Boston. We just want to be known as the company that does the right thing."

Whether it's how they treat customers and employees, their education efforts, or their willingness to identify bugs strangers send them in the mail, that commitment shines through. ●

The author is a Cleveland, Ohio-based writer.