

Passionate Work-a-holic

A typical day for Paramus, N.J.-based Bug Doctor/Bird Doctor Owner **Stuart Aust** is anything but typical.



By **Pete Grasso** • Technical Editor

It's a little before 7:30 a.m. when Stuart Aust rushes through the doors of his Paramus, N.J.-based Bug Doctor Termite and Pest Control/Bird Doctor Nationwide offices. With a big grin on his face, he greets the few employees already at work, and then rushes down the hall to his office.

Make no mistake, Aust is neither just beginning his day, nor is he late. Aust already put in a couple hours of work at home (he typically wakes up at 5 a.m.). His high-energy style makes it seem like he's always in a hurry. And he is — he's in a hurry to get things done.

Aust takes a seat at his desk — stacks and stacks of neatly organized files surround him — and goes over his plan for the day. He catches up on e-mail and leaves voicemail instructions for Toni Corrigan (one of his two full-time assistants) on whom to follow up with, what to say, and where he'll be. He leaves a handful of other documents to prepare for his approval.

It's a whirlwind of activity, followed by a sudden silence as he peruses a contract for a new client. The calm at the eye of the storm doesn't last long — within minutes, he's back on the phone leaving another voicemail for Corrigan. He's both full of energy and excitement, yet calm and collected at the same time. He's passionate.

Sitting on his desk, I spy what could perhaps be the secret to Aust's frenetic pace: it's an energy bar, naturally.

"That, and Starbucks," Aust jokes. "I've already had a couple of cups of coffee at home this morning."

This morning, Aust and I are heading off to pitch a big commercial client. I've been instructed to "wear a shirt and tie." Aust is wearing a tie with his impeccable white Bug Doctor dress shirt (in his car hangs a clean Bird Doctor dress shirt because, "I don't want to confuse a Bird Doctor client by showing up in a Bug Doctor shirt," he says).

This is a cold call. We're meeting with the facilities

manager of a company that operates more than 7 million square feet of office space in the U.S. Aust later tells me this wasn't so much him pitching his business as it was them interviewing him for an opportunity to pitch his business.

The office where we meet in New Jersey is right on the river, and we're escorted into a room overlooking the massive Manhattan skyline. It's an intimidation tactic, one which Aust quickly diffuses by naming a list of his high-profile clients: The New York Yankees, Rockefeller Center, The U.S.S. Intrepid, Chelsea Pier, The Plaza Hotel ...

"We've serviced those condos for years," he says, pointing to the riverfront complex directly across the street.

The meeting goes well. As the owner of the company, Aust believes it's important to go on sales calls and new business pitches himself, to show potential clients they're valuable enough to warrant a visit from the owner.

Aust passes the first test. In a few months, the company's contract with its current pest management provider expires and Bug Doctor will be included in the bidding process. On a separate matter, the company invites Aust to take a look at another facility regarding a possible bird exclusion contract (a few weeks later, Bird Doctor snagged this \$20,000 business).

Aust walks out of the meeting and immediately calls Corrigan, leaving a message with instructions to follow up with everyone he met with at the meeting, thanking them for the opportunity and addressing some of the specific points they'd discussed.

"Timing really is everything," he says. "You have to strike while the iron is hot — while they still remember who you are."

We're done a little earlier than expected, so Aust calls a friend of his who works in the same building. The two have known each other since kindergarten and are close friends. They sit and chat for a bit, catching up on each other's families. Then, it's back to work.

"Let's pop in at those condos across the street and just make sure everything is going well," Aust says.

On the way in, he spots a rodent bait station in less than acceptable condition, and he makes a mental note. He asks the security guard at the front desk to direct us to the property manager's office. When we reach her office, she is beside herself — the owner of Bug Doctor, wearing a tie, has stopped in simply to check to make sure she was happy with his company's service.

You can tell she isn't used to this type of treatment from other contractors she works with.

The property manager says she's very pleased with the service and alerts Aust of a recent situation in which a few cockroaches were spotted in the hallway near where someone new had just moved in.

We bid farewell, but not until after Aust hands her (and her assistant) a Bug Doctor coffee mug filled with a Bug Doctor magnet, a Bug Doctor pen, a plastic cockroach and a pocket-sized New York Yankee's schedule.

Mere steps out of the building, Aust is again on the phone to Corrigan, leaving instructions to schedule a complimentary service to take care of the cockroach problem, to get a technician out to service the rodent bait station and to follow up with the property manager and thank her for her time.

After a quick lunch, we're back in the car headed to his next appointment. But first, it's time for Aust to "re-fuel" — he steers the car into a Starbucks parking lot.

Driving around, Aust points out this building and that building, one after another — all Bug Doctor clients.

Our next stop is at a small apartment building in Teaneck, N.J. A property management client Aust works with just acquired the building, and has asked Bug Doctor to conduct a quick inspection to determine any

possible troubles.

It might seem a little beneath his status as owner, but Aust insists on doing initial inspections for key clients.

"It's good to know everybody, obviously, but especially your key clients," Aust says. "You want to stay in front of them at all times."

The building manager shows us around and Aust makes notes of potential problem areas, taking pictures with his BlackBerry to e-mail to his client.

Back at the office, Aust checks in with Corrigan and the two debrief each other on their days.

Tim Periard, Aust's veteran branch manager, joins him in his office and the two go over the day's most pressing issues. It's only 3:30 p.m., but Aust is in a hurry to get his paperwork done

so he can leave — one of his four sons, Michael, has a baseball game tonight, and he doesn't want to miss out.

"My dad always told me, 'There's no instant replay when it comes to your family,'" Aust says. "I try my best to be there on the sidelines for all four of our sons' games."

Rest-assured, when the game is over, and after his family has finished dinner, Aust is back at work in his home office.

"I'm a work-a-holic," Aust admits. "There's a fine line, though. I think some work-a-holics aren't passionate about what they do. Because I'm so passionate, at times it seems like I'm having too much fun." **PMP**

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