

Over the course of 2008, this space will identify opportunities within customers' homes that you may not have observed in the past. The opportunities are based on a recent homeowner survey conducted by Decision Analyst, Inc.

It will soon be April, and it all seems to come down to the cost of energy here in my city. My local energy utility is helping with rebates again, and I'm using them along with my version of hybrid products for the home. Are there other suggestions to help my sales staff?

Thanks for your note. By the time this is published, it will be April, and in many parts of the country the main issue will be the increased cost of energy. *The American Home Comfort Study* looks at homeowner satisfaction with their local utilities, as well as their satisfaction with the installing contractor, and the products they install. Here are some findings from the utility files.


- The uninterrupted supply of energy is the major reason homeowners are satisfied with their local energy utilities.
- The rising cost of energy is the leading reason they're *not* satisfied.

Those still more satisfied (in spite of higher costs) mention two distinct things some utilities are doing:

- communicating things they can do to help keep the cost of energy down in their home
- communicating the rebates available for homeowners looking for more energy efficient homes.

Unfortunately for homeowners, too few energy utilities get high scores for providing the above in a way that's easy to find, understand, or use. The homeowner consultant who happens to be in the HVAC business can become even more important to your prospect by communicating the above in an easy to use way.

If your local utility does not list things homeowners can do to lower costs, consider building your own. Different sites will help you build more. Remember to look at websites of surrounding community utilities until you find their lists. Then, create your own for your customers in your market.

Next, finding and printing your area's energy utility rebates, whether easy or hard to find, can elevate you in your prospect's eyes, especially when you list all of them, whether they deal with HVAC or not. Using the information when selling the "best" system, and tying it all back for your customer, completes the cycle. Something this simple to do, and yet so essential to your customers, really helps you become the consultant they are looking for in their market. Lower energy costs, and the homeowner's ability to comfortably remain in their home may depend on you! 

Garry Upton of Decision Analyst, Inc., shares his interpretations of its American Home Comfort Study of homeowners, and probes into what customers look for in HVAC contractors. To learn more about this study, or to purchase it, contact Garry Upton at gupton@decisionanalyst.com