

BY GARRY UPTON

Over the course of 2009, 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.

Q *What are some inventive ways HVAC contractors are expanding upon service agreements?*

A In February, I attended the Air Conditioning Contractor's of America (ACCA) annual conference in Fort Worth, TX. Key themes were green concepts and indoor air quality (IAQ). Conversations in the halls included ways to expand business based on incorporating those products into service contracts. The contractors I talked with attributed their current success to staying in touch with their customers through service contracts and/or clean-and-checks. They were making money with well organized service plans. When I returned to my office, I found that more than half of all homeowners are getting at least one system

inspection per year, and more than one in five have a service contract (based on the Decision Analyst American Home Comfort Study).

Some contractors I spoke with are expanding their service contracts, which now may include the water heater, IAQ products, and other green-based comfort products.

Replacing filters, checking ductwork for leaks, and balanced air delivery was a no brainer, but checking the fireplace, the ceiling fans, the water heaters, and the IAQ products (central and portable) began to expand my thoughts as to what's possible.

At the ACCA conference, I always learn a great deal by visiting seminars, and by talking to HVAC contractor experts. My questions included these:


Q: "Why check something you can't

clean or fix?"

A: "We don't inspect anything that we aren't expert at inspecting. So, we do fix and/or network with others to fix most of those things we inspect."

Q: "If someone can fix most of what you inspect, what about servicing portable IAQ equipment?"

A: "If I'm the homeowner and I can only relate to a portable, I will assume the central product will carry with it some of the same limitations.

"Without including the portables in the service contract, there is no one in their home who can 'officially' talk about them. By adding the portables, it's official. It's now my job to inform them." 

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