

Frequently Asked Questions

BY GARRY UPTON

Over the course of 2006, 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.

This Month's FAQ (part 2): *Last month's question asked what contractors are doing to remain competitive in this age of government regulation and higher energy costs. Here are some observations based on consumer comments from the American Home Comfort study.*

The study found that homeowners rely on people, information services, and events to help them decide on an HVAC contractor to use. It also pointed out that typically, a homeowner's primary resource is the contractor himself.

However, if the contractor relies on only himself, he reduces his business by half — only half the work done in


homes is based on a known relationship between the decision-maker and the contractor.

Listening to contractors tell me they are doing a lot to improve their businesses, and then listening to the consumer, I see a possible disconnect. Contractors need to make sure that everything they do differentiates them from the pack in the eyes of the consumer. Here are a few questions to ask yourself based on this:

- If training is a key, what do you do to market that fact to the customer? Certification? Advertising your company's capabilities?
- If marketing and/or public relations classes are part of your training focus, how do you communicate what you

learn to your entire team? Do you track the success of those marketing efforts? Do you try new things and abandon things that don't work? Do you set aside money from the "busy season" to promote and advertise in the off-season?

● If belonging to contractor groups is key, what are you doing internally to share the knowledge?

Training and information is abundant. The real key is what you do with the information to differentiate yourself in your community with your prospect and client base. 

Garry Upton of Decision Analyst, Inc. shares his interpretations of a study of 19,000 homeowners, and probes what they look for in HVAC contractors. To learn more about this study, or purchase it, contact Garry at gupton@decisionanalyst.com.