

# Frequently Asked Questions

BY GARRY UPTON

*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.*

**H**ow many homeowners do you need to sell your products and services to annually to be successful?

This past week I spent time with Mark Penn, the author of *"microtrends: the small forces behind tomorrow's big changes."* His premise is you don't have to market to a large number of people to succeed.

When you look at your history, how many homeowners did it take in order for you to be successful last year and the year before? Do you know who your customers are and what they look like? Have you personally built rapport with them? If so, you can successfully find ways to meet and market to those like them.


Penn identifies the total number of men and women in the work force, and

identifies a unique group of two-income couples. It got me to thinking about my family and our neighborhood.

While we're not the same kind of commuters Penn listed, most of the people on my block are commuters. My wife and I are each a good hour from home when we're at work every day. When we need service, we have to take a half-day of vacation to meet our contractor.

If my contractor told me he was beginning a bonded professional service that would allow me to stay at work while they visited our home, I would be ecstatic. I would tell my neighbors to look him up on his website and read about his company's "While You're Away" service plan. He would eventually own my block with his service contracts and emergency service.

This is just one microtrend you could explore. You could similarly arrange many of your customers into unique groups and provide a service to them. Maybe it's based on the unique HVAC equipment they own that you are an expert with. Maybe it's the 8% of all homeowners who own more than one home. It could be those who homeschool their children, or any one of many other groups.

Your business is very much a relationship business. By looking at your customers and finding groupings that make sense you can build service and products that will appeal to their life style. 

**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](mailto:gupton@decisionanalyst.com).

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