

>COMFORT FAQ


BY GARRY UPTON

Over the course of 2009, this space has identified 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. Watch this space for more FAQ advice in 2010.

Q What do homeowners say about the professionalism of their HVAC contractor?

A In 2008 we've found that more homeowners want their HVAC contractor to be a trusted consultant. In today's economic conditions it's important to review what you're doing and building. We've provided 12 questions to help you with your residential homeowner review.

1. Is your company in the business of fixing what's broken, or are you a "home energy and comfort consultant?"
2. Have you built a business relationship with homeowners, or do you let the weather and economy dictate your business situation?
3. Do you hire technicians with good customer relationship skills and personalities?
4. Does your business model encourage relationship-building with customers? Do you instruct technicians in how to speak to homeowners?
5. Do you spend more of your time covering technical issues or building your name in the community?
6. How well do your recent customers know your name? How well do they know you?
7. Are you ahead of the move to the Internet, and strong online advertising?
8. Have you chosen strong manufacturing partners, those who will help you win customers?
9. Are you building a strong company, or are you simply working at staying busy?
10. Do you take the time to understand your community, your local economy, your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats? Do you plan your year around that knowledge?
11. Have you built a company with expertise in each department?
12. Do you trust the professionals you've brought in to run their departments, or do you "micro-manage," intervene often, and hold back your business by doing so?

Answering these questions may help you focus on the business you want your organization to become. Homeowners want a consultant they can depend on, one they will call on many times over the next few years. So think of this for 2010: In what ways can you position your company to best respond to your customers needs? 

Garry Upton, of Decision Analyst, Inc., based in Arlington, TX 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.