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## Letter from the Executive

*By Tom Wessner*

Hello Friends,

Can you believe that it's already April? Not only does that mean Spring has officially sprung, it also means that a third of 2010 is almost over. It seems like time moves faster and faster, and this year is no exception.

When time is speeding by, it can be easy to forget or to let small things in your business slip through the cracks. But as we all know, it's the little details that can have the greatest impact on the success – or failure – of your business.

That's why ACCA-WPA tries to stay on top of the issues you're facing as an HVACR contractor. There are changes and opportunities unique to our industry, and we want to help you make the most of both. Let us know what we can do for you!

Tom Wessner  
ACCA-WPA President

## Marketing

### The Season for Indoor Air Quality Services

*By Adams Hudson*

Spring is in the air, and that's great – especially if you like pollen, allergies, sneezing and so forth. Yet the problems of springtime breathing issues also create opportunities for household breathing solutions.

One of the best times to remind customers about Indoor Air Quality issues can be when their noses are stopped up, and they're sniffing their way through the weeds the lawn just sprouted overnight. So, as you talk to customers in ads and in person, tell them what they need to know:

- Americans spend 90% of their time indoors these days.
- Indoor air often contains higher concentrations of hazardous pollutants than outdoor air.
- Indoor air pollution is one of the top five environmental risks to public health.

We've been talking about this for awhile, and the support just keeps on coming. In fact, researchers from Johns Hopkins University released a study this year that – not surprisingly – found an association between increasing levels of indoor particulate matter pollution and the severity of asthma symptoms among children.

They followed 150 asthmatic children for six months, using monitoring equipment to measure the air in the child's bedroom at scheduled intervals. And they came to conclusions that verify the need for IAQ services: understanding the effects of indoor air is important because children spend so much time indoors, and improving indoor air quality may also help improve asthma health.

An important part of serving others is educating them about potential problems they face and options they have to resolve these problems. So what will you do about what you know about IAQ? Tell your customers.

Educate them about the pollutants that may be building within the air in their homes, help them identify the symptoms they may have been experiencing, and let them know about the solutions you have to offer. In other words, let them know what you know, and you'll both benefit from this important exchange of information.

*Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner, winner of the Dan Kennedy National Sales Letter Contest, and author of Contractor Marketing Secrets. He is also available to speak at local and Chapter events.*

### Tank Your Competition With Tune-Ups

What if someone tried to convince you to become a “loyal customer” before you were even a customer? Can you imagine how unpersuasive a headline like this would be: “Become a Loyal Customer, and We’ll Take Good Care of You.” It’d make you sound like the kind of company folks don’t want to do business with *at all!*

Essentially, this is why it isn’t effective to market maintenance agreements to the general public. A more effective strategy is to bring in customers by marketing tune-ups and then “wow” them with your top-notch service. Next, at the point of presenting the invoice, you demonstrate how they can save big with a regular maintenance agreement.

If they see the light, you both win. Once your customers sign up for a maintenance agreement, they can count on regular tune-ups which usually lead to longer equipment life. Plus, they get other benefits such as priority emergency service and discounts on parts.

And you can count on going to their home twice a year to perform routine maintenance and possibly find an upgrade opportunity. The best part for you is that the semi-annual tune-ups are performed during a season when lots of HVAC companies are begging the phone to ring – and the numbers are bound to be higher given the economic climate.

So whatever you do, don’t let anyone tell you that marketing for maintenance agreements works as well as a face-to-face when the customer is getting the bill for the tune-up. That’s when the benefits get their full attention. So market for tune-ups to the public then the MA. You’ll do much better.

#### To Market Tune Ups:

- Put a tune-up ad in your customer newsletter – or at the very least, print a story about it. Your customers need to be educated about the importance of tune-ups.
- Put an ad in your newspaper (preferably 2 col x 5 or 2 col x 7) that screams benefits loud and clear. You’ll get calls if you word it right.
- Send a powerful postcard to your demand customer base or in an area you want to work.
- Follow-up with a phone call. If they don’t want it, that’s fine. No pressure, please.

At this time of the year – when business slows to a snail’s pace – the way to bring in new customers is with tune-ups, so make sure they’re a part of your marketing strategy this season. And once you get those calls, turn your tune-up customers into maintenance agreement customers.

Just remember, a call for a tune-up on a slow day can be a blessing. Converting that call to a maintenance agreement customer can be a year-after-year bonanza.

## “I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?”

Social networking is changing the face of communication amongst friends, family, businesses, and now, ACCA.

“The staff at ACCA constantly strives to find new ways to communicate across various platforms,” says Kevin Holland, vice president of business operations and membership. “Some of our members prefer traditional emails and web communications, but a growing number of contractors are finding that social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter allow them to keep up with ACCA happenings in real time.” Learn more at [www.acca.org](http://www.acca.org).

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

### SmartWords

“The secret of success is constancy to purpose.”

Benjamin Disraeli

### Techno Tidbit

Did you know that there is now a remote controlled register vent booster fan? AirFlow Breeze Ultra can easily be installed in underperforming registers. Plus, the fan has a built in temperature gage that tells it when to deliver warm or cool air to a room. Check it out at:

[www.achrnews.com/Articles/Products/BNP\\_GUID\\_9-5-2006\\_A\\_1000000000000750222](http://www.achrnews.com/Articles/Products/BNP_GUID_9-5-2006_A_1000000000000750222)

## ACCA Benefit Highlight

### CalcuNow™

Make sure that the gross margin you *want* is the gross margin you *get* with the help of CalcuNow, ACCA's online margin calculator. Here's what you'll need to use CalcuNow ([www.acca.org/calculnow](http://www.acca.org/calculnow)) on a job:

- A breakdown of all of your costs in Materials, Equipment, Direct Labor, Subcontract Costs, Sales Tax, Warranty Costs, and Other Costs.
- Your overhead percentage and the net profit percentage you want to make.

CalcuNow will show you the results based on the values you entered, and even offer other possibilities. Of course, you'll also need your member-only username and password. You can use CalcuNow as often as you like – for free!

## The Art of Management

### How to Find Out What Your Customers Are Thinking

We may not always know as much about our customers as we think we do. Oh, sure, they're clear when they want something fixed or replaced. But there could be lots more information that would be helpful in how you serve, how you market and how you make contact. And part of managing your business is getting that information. Look to any of the following sources:

1. **Staff** – Your dispatcher, your techs, your sales team, or anyone else who comes in contact with customers is in a position to gain their feedback. Encourage them to listen to customers and make a note of whatever they're asking about, complaining about, or being complimentary about.
2. **Customer Comments** – You can generate these by leaving room on invoices for customer comments, creating an online customer comment form for your website, or providing postage-paid comment cards at the end of a service call. Essentially, you'll be saying something like, "Is there anything we can do to improve? Let us hear from you..."
3. **Customer Database** – What are your customer records telling you? There's a goldmine of information in your files about what customers need and when they need it.
4. **Annual Surveys** – Send these out to customers knowing that those who respond could give you valuable feedback. And even those who don't have just experienced a valuable "customer contact" letting them know you value their input and want to serve them better. To increase response, consider offering a discount on service.
5. **Competition** – Watch to see what others in your industry are doing. If you notice a great offer, chances are, your customers are noticing it too.

## Rule Breaking 101

***"The bigger your Yellow Page ad, the better the results."***

**False:** Smaller, less expensive ads that are well written *consistently* pull more leads and sales than poorly written ads of the same size and larger. Remember that the next time your ad rep tries to sell you a two-page, full-color ad.

## News Flash

The Latest from  
ACCA National

Cashflow Budgeting and  
Collections

April 20, 2010  
2pm Eastern

Cash flow problems put more companies out of business than any other single cause, except improper labor pricing. This program will take a close look at why developing a month by month, department by department cash flow budget is critical to your company.

Having the ability to project monthly cash flow requirements might just be the piece of the puzzle your company needs to help it continue profitable growth in these tough economic times. The session will review a formal collections policy, as well as provide dozens of put-in-place-today tips for improving your company's cash flow.

**About the Presenter:** Tom Grandy has over 30 years experience in industry and small business. He is the founder and president of Grandy & Associates. The vision of Grandy & Associates is to "teach contractors how to run profitable businesses".

You can learn more about this *ComfortU* seminar at [www.acca.org](http://www.acca.org).