

## Letter from the Executive

*By Tom Wessner*

Hello Friends,

Another year is gone, and 2010 is already moving full speed ahead. Hopefully you've made notes about what worked and what didn't work in 2009 and you've got your New Year's business resolutions ready to go.

Remember, regardless of the economy or the weather, you control your business – and part of that is starting the year with a viable plan for the year. If you're failing to plan, you're planning to fail. And that's something that no one can afford.

If there's anything we can do here at ACCA-WPA to help make the next year more successful for you, please let us know. We're here to help you make sure your business is the best it can be.

*Tom Wessner*  
ACCA-WPA President

## Marketing

### Media Planning: Consider the Alternatives

*By Adams Hudson*

Does your media plan have any alternatives? There should be, if you're taking your alternative media choices seriously. First, a refresher on what we mean by "alternative media." Alternative media in a marketing context is, basically, anything that promotes your message that isn't television, radio or print. And, these days, there are lots of alternatives to consider.

- **Spin the Web** – For any type of business of any size – from local to global – the most common form of "alternative media" is the Internet. Yes, today's website is yesterday's Yellow Pages, as far as providing contact information and service listings.

Internet technology – including targeted email to customers, customer response forms, printable discounts, blogs, podcasts, banner ads on linked sites, online lead generation services, and anything else that regular media can do that technology can do better (for less) – is ripe for the harvest.

- **But Wait, There's More...** What else will you find in the alternative arena? Almost anything that you can get your name on – vehicle signage, door hangers, yard signs, refrigerator magnets, windshield scrapers, calendars, notepads, pens. Alternative paid advertising could include ads in movie theaters or on restaurant placemats, pizza boxes, or even delivery menus. And they're just the type of alternative media that gets your name in the public and reminds your customers of who you are.

- **Your Mail's Running** – So you better go catch it! Thank-you cards and happy cards are more great ways to let your customers know you appreciate them. And newsletters let them know you remember them.

But don't waste that "hold" button. When you must put a customer on hold, make use of that valuable time with on-hold messages that can pique their interest in other valuable services that you can provide.

- **And, Finally...** Would you believe that the oldest marketing method on earth – word of mouth – is being looked at as a new phenomenon in alternative marketing? It's also known as "buzz marketing," which means that something you're doing has got everybody talking.

So, keep looking for ways to be seen and heard... because whatever you find, and wherever you spread your message, remember: there's always an alternative.

*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.*

### The #1 HVAC Sales Offense

What's the most important thing you can do after your customer makes a big-ticket purchase? Hint: it's not "Which way to the bank?" Or: "What other lucky person gets to talk to me today?" It's saying "Thank You."

The biggest offense in your sales procedure is – are you ready? – nothing. Yes, I said "nothing" as in no appreciation, no follow up, no upsell, no continued service attempt, no letter, no nothing. Eventually you'll be met with a "no thanks" on your attempt at a next sale.

It's not just the words "thank you"; it is the act of thankful recognition that fails to be delivered. Research shows that 77% of big-ticket item purchasers are not recognized or congratulated after the sale. And we wonder why there's a Customer Retention problem in contracting? These follow-ups are not just polite; they're necessary for building long-term relationships and referrals.

If you hope to survive, you can't just "check off" your customers once you get their check. Tell them "thank you" in a systemized way that maintains the relationship you just spent a lot of money and time to establish. Think of it as increasing the return on your investment.

Don't just send a "standard" thank you card where you simply "fill in the blanks" with their name and yours. Send a real letter or make a "happy call" (*Were you pleased? Were we on time?*) Ask them to complete a customer survey. Anything that involves them in the *furthering* of the relationship is good.

For larger ticket purchases, you can send a fruit or snack basket with "healthy" beverages and a card: "Cheers to good comfort and health with your new system." One of the smartest contractors I know has a local florist send flowers in a company mug. This amounts to lots of flowers every month, lots of recognition, lots of happy ladies and appreciative guys...with one huge added bonus.

Do you think the florist has a customer list? Do you think he'd approve a mailing to this list introducing if not *endorsing* you and your service? We call these COI (Circle of Influence) letters – they work.

Just give your customers *something* they'll remember. After a big-ticket purchase, a \$4 item may be the best marketing you can do. And it opens the door for many more sales and referrals.

To keep your customers, you must make regular contact after the sale. This can be done with a strong customer retention program that includes "thank you" calls or cards, customer newsletters, holiday cards, maintenance reminders, special offers, and small gifts.

And the best time to get that program started is with a "thank you" right after a purchase. Your system sale is *not the end* of anything. It's the beginning of everything else.

### "I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?"

Each state has different rules and regulations regarding HVACR licensing and business operations. While we can't keep track of everything that happens in all 50 states, we have compiled some basic information and links to point you in the right direction. ACCA's HVAC StateWatch is a service that consolidates important links and general information in every state in the country on licensing, incorporation, and general business laws.

Visit [www.acca.org](http://www.acca.org) for more information.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

#### SmartWords

"You will either step forward into growth or you will step back into safety."

Abraham Maslow

#### Techno Tidbit

GeoEnergy Enterprises based in Delaware, has developed an HVAC system that is self-contained. Called the GeoSource, the new system "offers the benefits of both direct-exchange ground source heat pumps and air source heat pumps, and attempts to use each to make up for the inherent weaknesses of the other." Read more about the new HVAC system when you visit:<http://www.goodway.com/hvac-blog/?p=2222>.

## ACCA Benefit Highlight

### Contractor Excellence® Magazine

ACCA's magazine was founded in 2002 and re-launched with an updated design last year as a quarterly source of business information for the HVAC industry. Addressing issues such as the diminishing work force and preparing for industry changes, Contractor Excellence keeps you up to date on the largest issues facing your business and your industry. And it's only available to ACCA members.

For more information, visit [www.acca.org](http://www.acca.org).

## The Art of Management

### To Manage, First You Must Lead

In order to manage effectively, it's necessary to be a strong leader. Being a strong leader doesn't mean being intimidating or overbearing – it means inspiring trust and confidence in your employees so that they can see your vision and then work *with* you to take your business there. So what are the characteristics that make a successful leader? According to Susan M. Heathfield, author of "Leadership Success Secrets", a true leader must:

1. **Choose to lead.** Leadership doesn't just happen. You have to choose to be in charge of the direction of your company.
2. **Be the person others choose to follow.** That means earning the respect of your employees through fairness and consistency.
3. **Provide vision for the future.** Followers will work harder when they know where they're headed.
4. **Make other people feel important and appreciated.** When your followers feel appreciated, they're willing to go above and beyond for you and the business.
5. **Live your values. Behave ethically.** You'll earn the respect of your employees and their loyalty.
6. **Set the pace through your expectations and example.** Followers do what they see. If you're willing to work hard to reach the goal, they'll follow your example.
7. **Establish an environment of continuous improvement.** Everyone makes mistakes. The key is to learn from the error, then get up and keep going – and do better the next time.

## Rule Breaking 101

**"It's smart to put everything you do or sell in an ad so you'll get the most response from the largest group."**

**FALSE:** Not even close. This worn-out 'advice' is a fast way to disappointment since specificity, not generalities, generates response. If you want response, then aim at a well-chosen target using laser-like focus toward a singular outcome.

## News Flash

The Latest from  
ACCA National

Basic HVAC Electricity  
January 28, 2010  
2:00pm Eastern  
ComfortU

We're going to look at electricity through the eyes of the HVAC service technician. The principles of electricity will be explained.

- Transformer construction and many of the transformer formula will be discussed.
- Electrical symbols will be detailed as well as relays, contactors and starters.
- Parallel and series wiring of loads will be determined.
- The proper use of electrical indicating devices and proper voltage, polarity and ground will be explained.
- Single and three phase service panels will be discussed.

**About the Presenter:** Jack Rise, Jack is an EPIC certified instructor for all of the ACCA residential manuals. He travels around the country conducting seminars on residential and commercial load calculations, system design, and on the use of HVAC computer based software. Jack currently runs training sessions for NATE and EPA/CFC certifications, and is an instructor for his local ACCA chapter. Jack is a 30 year member of RSES.

You can learn more about the session at [www.acca.org](http://www.acca.org).



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# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

### The Essential Partner for Contractor Excellence!®

## News & Events

### January 14, 2010

Safety Issues & Hazardous Materials  
Bella Frutteto – Wexford, PA

### February 18, 2010

Economy and Forecast for the  
Pittsburgh Area  
Holiday Inn - Meadowlands

### March 6 -9, 2010

ACCA National Convention  
Tampa, Florida

### March - No general meeting.

## Hot Topics

### Getting Started

- This is the time to set your budget, decide your goals, media use, and ad selection. The HVAC PowerPlan takes about 20 minutes to lay out the full year for you.
- Send letters to missed sales from the past 90 days. Be sure to include incentives such as rebates since the holidays have just passed.

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