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Letter from the Executive

By Tom Wessner

Hello Friends,

This is the month we celebrate Independence – freedom for our way of life, freedom to celebrate our personal beliefs, and freedom to live out the American dream.

Many of you are doing just that, building the backbone of America with your businesses. Since more than fifty percent of our country's workforce is employed by small businesses, that's no small matter.

That's why ACCA-WPA works hard to help your business succeed. The tools that ACCA provides to contractors can help you along the way in your "pursuit of happiness" for your business. Let us know what we can do to – we're here to serve.

Tom Wessner
ACCA-WPA President

Marketing

Comfort From An Old Friend

By Adams Hudson

In times like these, the image your company projects is more important than ever. Why? It's simple...

A customer concerned about his own cash flow is carefully considering the spending choices he makes. When he has a need, he wants to turn to a company that is trustworthy, honorable, reliable. He's looking for someone who has been a friend to him in the past and/or will be a friend to him in the future.

He'll look for the company that projects an image of quality *and* caring, giving him a feeling of reassurance. And he'll be especially wary of the company who is trying to make a fast buck in a slow time – at his expense.

What that means to you is that, in times like these, your reputation becomes your survival. Your reputation, of course, is fed not just by the quality work you do but also by the image your marketing projects.

In many cases, products and services provided by contractors are seen as "essential," not as luxury items. That's a plus. Does anyone really expect to live without air conditioning? Not in this century.

So, you're already ahead of the game because you've got what customers need (as far as products and services go). And yet there's one more step. Your customers also need to know who *you* are and who you will be to them.

That's in the image you project. If you intend to be the friend they're looking for, tell them so. If you intend to be trustworthy, honorable and reliable, make sure they know.

HVAC contractors provide one of the most welcome types of services customers can receive – you help make them comfortable in their own home. That's the work you're called to do. To keep that work coming, project an image that makes customers comfortable with who you are.

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.

Simple Sales Strategies

When Leads And Sales Don't Come Who's to Blame?

Any contracting business can hit a rough patch from time to time. The key to overcoming it is knowing what went wrong and what to do about it. Take a look at the following common problem areas and their solutions. You can easily avoid the "blame game" in a way that generates leads, increases closing ratios and improves profits.

1. **Low phone traffic?** – Look to your marketing for the trouble it's causing you. The purpose of marketing is to level out weather-driven leads. If it isn't, chances are, you're either badly under-marketed or you're spending good money on bad marketing.

Solution: Follow a four-point plan for identifying with your audience – research, resell, reap, and repeat.

2. **Many leads, few sales?** – If you're getting many leads, but few sales, that's not a marketing problem. That's a selling problem. Sure, you may get some unqualified leads, but the salesperson is usually too quick to blame "price, products or people" instead of "poor presentation and preparation."

Solution: Draw a clear distinction between you and your competition by delivering a comprehensive, yet brief, sales presentation that builds confidence and trust in you, your company and your recommendations. Talk about your prospects' needs and problems and how you and your products or services will provide the right solutions. Provide your techs with "presentation" training that will help them be better prepared in front of prospects.

3. **Many leads and sales, but no money** – You're spending lots of money and lots of energy and getting lots of work done – but it's not paying off for you. Take a look at your overhead, scheduling and any waste, of course. Also recognize that the real culprit could be your pricing strategy. If you're trying to be the "cheapest in town," your competition isn't running you out of business – you're doing that to yourself. When you're losing money on calls, you're better off financially not showing up at all.

Solution: There are two pricing strategies for special offers – one is a penetration strategy, which means that you are basically seeking entry into a customer's home. This strategy works if your technicians are properly trained to look for additional work and trained to consult with the customer. If they aren't – and if your technicians merely walk in and perform the maintenance work – you are going to lose money and opportunities.

The second strategy is to price for profit. By pricing for profit, your customer will perceive that your service has more value, taking these two factors into account: 1) What they consider value for the price; and 2) How your price is positioned against the competition. The key to price for profit is being able to demonstrate value. Your responsibility is to make certain that your technicians inform your customers about the value they are getting.

So, put your finger on the problem above, and focus on the solution. You'll find that solutions are much easier to live with!

"I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?"

ACCA has released a new four-part computer video training series in installing gas furnaces, the latest in its popular series of on-demand CD education for technicians and contractors. **Mastering Gas Furnace Installation** is designed to help technicians and others prepare for, take and pass the NATE specialty exam in gas furnace installation. The training, sold as a four-CD set with a list price of \$299 or a discounted \$199 to ACCA members, is available for purchase online or by calling 1-888-290-2220. Learn more at www.natetraining.com.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

SmartWords

"The successful person makes a habit of doing what the failing person doesn't like to do."

Thomas Edison

Techno Tidbit

Did you know that there's a company called Aspen Air, based in Martinez, CA that has been developing an HVAC filtration system that not only removes 99% of breathable small particles, but also improves system efficiency by 30%? You can learn more at: <http://www.cleantech.com/news/5818/filter-tech-promises-30-energy-redu>.

ACCA Benefit Highlight

New Forms & Templates Library

A new library of business forms and templates has been developed and made available for ACCA members. The forms – initially covering a variety of areas including employee incentives, inventory, inspections, and more – are available for download in Microsoft Word format, allowing for simple customization.

The Forms & Templates Library will be a growing resource and is available for download by members at www.acca.org/forms. ACCA encourages its member contractors to continue sharing forms and documents they have developed for their own business. Share documents with Kimya Bailey Cajchun at kimya.cajchun@acca.org or call 703-824-8845 for more information.

The Art of Management

For Success, Manage Your Service

Sorry to be so obvious. But apparently, some folks let the obvious just float right over their heads. For example, what would your frontline customer service personnel do about a phone call asking for information about a service you provide?

Please say you're serious enough about thriving and surviving that you'd ask for the person's name. Pretty please say you'd ask for a phone number or address. If you did either, shockingly, you'd be in the minority among businesses.

That's what a research firm found out in calls to 2,000 businesses asking a very basic question about a product or service. The results showed that:

- 79% did not ask for the caller's name.
- 86% did not ask for a phone number or address.
- 44% gave price and other information, but did not attempt to arrange an appointment.

In a sense, the person who answers your phone is the most valuable person in your business – because that's where your customer's relationship with you begins *or* ends. Make sure your customer service reps are well trained in their importance to your company and in the procedures to follow to respond to leads, collect information and secure appointments. Good service for your customers requires good management of your customer service reps – you won't have one without the other.

Rule Breaking 101

“E-marketing can replace your print marketing.”

FALSE: Thanks to the rise of SPAM filters and ease with which readers can unsubscribe or block you from sending them e-mail, e-marketing is tough. That's why it should be used to *reinforce* your print pieces and other marketing materials – not replace them. Make it part of your media mix, not the whole pie.

News Flash

**The Latest from
ACCA National
Basic Psychrometrics
July 15, 2010
2 p.m. Eastern**

This is a ground floor webinar. We will define all of the basic components of the psychrometric chart including dry bulb and wet bulb temperatures, relative humidity, grains of moisture, enthalpy and sensible heat ratio. Then we will show how all of these variables interact to create (or destroy) the relative comfort of the building occupants. Consideration for altitude correction will also be discussed.

About the Presenter: Jack Rise, CMS, is a Certificate Member Specialist of the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society (RSES). He has extensive industry experience having worked as a contractor for 18 years, as a distributor for 13 years and for a major HVAC manufacturer for 5 years. In 2004, Jack formed his own company, Jack Rise HVAC Technical Training, and works out of his offices in Tinton Falls, New Jersey and Tampa, Florida.

You can learn more about this *ComfortU* seminar at www.acca.org.