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## Letter from the Executive

By Tom Wessner,

Hello Friends,

Well, as if you needed to be reminded, the months are flying by, and it's already Spring. The first quarter of the year is drawing to a close, and with it come several opportunities for your business.

This is the time of year to be reinforcing the relationships you have with your customers. Why? Because one of your peak seasons is just around the corner. And when they're ready to call, you want them to think of you, not your competition.

ACCA can help. Check out the Member Benefit Highlight in this issue. Until next time,

Tom Wessner  
ACCA-WPA President

## Marketing

### Retention is the New Acquisition

By Adams Hudson

Your business is about sales. No sales means no business. Doesn't matter how "good" you are. In harsh business times, harsh reality is required: Customers *are* sales. With 2,100 ad messages a day, you think they're remembering you on their own? Not a chance. But there's good news, and here it is: Most other contractors aren't focusing on retention either. They're getting and forgetting them. So, how do you shift your "ignored" customers into being committed, referring, un-switchable customers. Use the Stay, Sway, and Stake method.

1. **Stay Relevant** – Most contractors just "do the job", present an invoice, and leave. This hardly makes you memorable. Repeat contact via email or newsletters works wonders. Facebook or other social media updates with similar, shorter information can be weekly. The point is to drive followers to your website, where they sign up for your newsletter.
2. **Sway Their Alliance** – Customer certificates, loyalty discounts, and seasonal offers (again, perfectly suited to your newsletter) keep you in front of them regularly, reminding them of your value, and why *you are their contractor*. Your goal is un-"switchability".
3. **Stake a Claim** – Look at your customer base geographically. You want to "own" the neighborhoods in clusters. This is done by making a neighborhood presence via a) Bold truck signage, b) Yard signage, c) Door hangers, d) Surround mailers, and again, e) Newsletters to surrounding homes with either a trial offer or a call-behind for service.

You may wonder, "Why a 'print' newsletter in this day and age?" 4 quick reasons: First, because they require a physical address, coincidentally located at their house (!). Second, because physical mail has a far higher perceived value than email or digital post. Third, since your competition is too cheap or lazy to send them, you'll stand out even more. Fourth and most importantly, because your customers are worth more than the two dollars a year it takes to print and mail them.

Ultimately, a strong customer retention program uses a newsletter as its centerpiece. Surveys show that loyal customers spend 33% more than non-loyal customers. And referrals among loyal customers are 107% greater than among non-loyal customers. If the business that wins a customer stays in touch, treats him fairly, remains valuable, and continues to build the relationship, the customer can't help but use and refer the business.

Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner. You can request his free marketing ezine and free marketing reports by emailing [FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com](mailto:FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com).

## Simple Sales Strategies

### Sales Closing Secrets

In sales, there is a huge difference between being “close” in a sale, and getting to “close” on a sale. One pays – the other doesn’t. Reasons for the missed close could be any of the following:

- **Not selling the company** – Customers draw many conclusions about you, your company and your competitors, but they’re looking for a “difference.” That difference is often the company’s integrity.
- **Not selling your honesty/trustworthiness** – Don’t get stuck on a great presentation that has no “personal” feel to it, no relationship, no eye-to-eye transfer of trust. The salesperson who fails to appear honest will not close many sales.
- **Not presenting the “closing solution” to the customer.** A customer wants his “solution” packaged for him – that’s why you’re there! Then, he wants this package presented as a logical, natural progression from his current situation to your solution for him. That’s all.

Effective closes come in all shapes and sizes that are just right for almost any occasion. Here’s one of the classics...

#### The Alternative Close of Choice (AKA The Dicker Close)

This close is so natural that it’s hard to resist. It’s also quite logical and usually avoids the sticking point of “Let me think about it” since you’re asking a direct question.

Basically, you’re giving the prospect a choice between two things, with either answer being a sale for you. The choice gives the customer a feeling of ownership in the decision – and results in ownership of the equipment as the close is finalized.

#### On the way to set up the close, you ask...

- “Since our pricing falls in line with your budget, which do you prefer, a <Brand> or a <Brand> system?”
- “Would the standard round thermostat be better, or do you prefer a digital programmable thermostat?”
- “We have 90 days same as cash, or I *may* be able to get you 6 full months with no payment. Which would help you better?”

In your progress toward the close, these “alternate of choices” have allowed the customer to personally select “their” system. They feel in control of these choices and if they ask for your input on helping them, you are stepping more into the advisory/expert role with each query. This builds their confidence and trust in you.

Remember that when you’ve covered the details and overcome any objections, you can close your prospect naturally with the Alternate of Choice method. Either answer is the same as “Sold!”

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

Want to meet and interact with other contractors to discuss your business hot topics? ACCA will hold its third annual National HVACR Residential Marketing & Sales Forum on April 4 & 5 in Arlington, Virginia.

For the third annual event, there’s an exciting new program featuring five of the most successful contractors in America, covering four of the most important topics in sales and marketing. Full program details and registration are available online for ACCA contractors at [www.hvacsalesforum.com](http://www.hvacsalesforum.com) or call Vickie Ellis at 703-824-8856.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

### SmartWords

“Make your product easier to buy than your competition, or you will find your customers buying from them, not you.”

Mark Cuban

### Techno Tidbit

Did you know that there’s a wireless video inspection system that allows video to be either viewed on a computer or streamed live through Skype®? The video can also be recorded or edited. The Seeker™ 100 system includes an RCV100 receiver, small wand, and flexible camera-tipped probe. To learn more, you can check it out at [www.achnews.com/Articles/Products](http://www.achnews.com/Articles/Products).

## ACCA Benefit Highlight

### HomeWords Newsletter

One of the most effective, cost-efficient ways to communicate with your customers is through a newsletter program. *HomeWords* is designed with informative, entertaining, and sales-building articles that customers read and enjoy. It is "season specific" and contains specially created ads for you to insert, along with your company logo and contact info for a custom look.

HomeWords is exclusively for ACCA members from the expert marketers at Hudson, Ink. **To order a free sample issue of HomeWords, submit your request at [www.acca.org/homewords/](http://www.acca.org/homewords/)**

## The Art of Management

### Most Coveted Employee Motivators

Too often managers feel that sales are the only important driver of business. Yet the very people in your organization that impact sales and your bottom-line don't feel "connected" enough to sales to understand how they can affect it.

You can motivate your employees with money, but as managers, this is pretty shortsighted. To say, "If we get a 10% net this month, we'll all go out to dinner" is great. But if you don't *manage and motivate their performance*, how will this ever be achieved?

Employees ages 25-49 ranked the most important motivating factors for their job performances:

- **Job security** – If a worker has a sense of insecurity, then performance suffers through a feeling of threat or dread. Lift the black cloud through guarantees.
- **Interesting work** – Creative people get stifled at "the same old thing" and sometimes start looking elsewhere when things grow stale. They need more challenging opportunities and responsibilities.
- **Personal loyalty** – Commitment-oriented individuals strive to put in what they get out, but it works both ways. If you don't reward their loyalty, they won't give it. Awards and other recognition help tremendously.

You need to put the proper motivators out there, or you won't get maximum performance. And isn't that what you're after?

## Rule Breaking 101

***"Being good at what you do means you will be successful."***

**False:** That is the greatest myth in all of contracting. If you're great at what you do and no one knows, how does your talent translate into profits? You *must* get your name out there through any means necessary – including advertising, testimonials, and publicity. All successful business market. Period.

## News Flash

### The Latest from ACCA National

**Residential Design for  
Quality Installation**

**Arlington, VA**

**March 15-17, 2011**

If your company needs simplified and practical procedures for calculating both heat loss and gain for residential structures using unitary a/c equipment, this Manual J 8th Edition training is for you.

With a focus on ACCA's *Manual J - 8th Abridged Edition*, this training helps contractors develop an understanding of how to calculate the many various components of a residential heating and cooling load - both manually and by using computer-assisted software.

This three day experience will give you all of the tools necessary to Design for Quality Installation. In addition, you'll get a peek at some extremely helpful software that can dramatically minimize the time required to perform the required calculations and system design without sacrificing either quality or accuracy.

Students will be expected to understand the basics of Microsoft® Windows.

To learn more, email:  
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