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COMBUSTION AND CO SAFETY

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- **Contractor Spotlight: Become the 'ComfortMasters' of Your Community**
- **Getzschman: A Tale of Business Succession and Partnerships**
- **High-Performance HVAC Is Our Brand**

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Nine Reasons Why You Should Perform Combustion Testing & CO Safety Checks



Mike Weil is editor-in-chief and director of communications and publications at National Comfort Institute, Inc. Contact him at ncilink.com/ContactMe.

Next month is **National Indoor Air Quality Awareness Month**. Now is the perfect time to bring important **IAQ awareness issues** to the forefront of your customers' minds as you conduct your fall maintenance schedules.

Improper gas-fired appliance combustion is one of many potential IAQ issues. From a **High-Performance HVAC Contracting** perspective, here are nine reasons why you should be performing combustion testing and CO (Carbon Monoxide) safety checks on every service call.

1. Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

Regular CO safety checks help identify potential sources of carbon monoxide leaks and prevent the risk of poisoning for occupants. As contractor Tom Spall says, "**Draft testing is the heart of performance safety.**"

2. Ensure Appliance Efficiency: **Combustion testing**

helps verify that gas-fired heating appliances (including furnaces, boilers, and water heaters) are burning fuel efficiently. Efficient combustion reduces energy waste, saves money on fuel bills, and minimizes greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Ensure Proper Ventilation:

Inadequate ventilation can lead to a buildup of combustion byproducts, including carbon monoxide, inside a building. Combustion testing helps ensure that **appliances are venting properly** and that indoor air quality is maintained at safe levels.

4. Comply with Regulations:

Many jurisdictions have regulations and codes in place that require HVAC contractors to perform combustion testing and CO safety checks to ensure the safety of occupants.

5. Detect Malfunctions and Safety Issues:

Combustion testing can help detect problems such as poor airflow, duct leakage, dangerous exhaust flue gas conditions, and more. Discovering these issues early helps prevent costly repairs, system breakdowns, and safety issues.

6. Enhance Customer Confidence:

Performing thorough combustion testing and CO safety checks demonstrates a commitment to customer safety and satisfaction. Customers are more likely to trust HVAC **contractors who prioritize safety** and take the necessary steps to ensure their systems are operating correctly.

7. Build a Professional Reputation:

HVAC contractors who consistently conduct combustion testing and CO safety checks **build a reputation** for being knowledgeable and responsible. This reputation can lead to increased customer referrals and repeat business.

8. Long-Term Cost Savings: **Regular maintenance**,

including combustion testing, can extend the lifespan of heating appliances and reduce the likelihood of major repairs or replacements. This can save customers money in the long run.

9. Educate Customers:

HVAC contractors can use combustion testing and CO safety checks as opportunities to **educate customers** about the importance of proper appliance maintenance and the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. This empowers customers to take proactive steps to ensure their safety.

Combustion testing and CO safety checks are crucial for maintaining safe and efficient HVAC systems. They protect occupants from risks of carbon monoxide exposure, ensure compliance with regulations, and contribute to the overall performance and longevity of heating appliances.



YOU SHOULD DO CO TESTING ON EVERY HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC MAINTENANCE CALL

Written by HVAC Contractors for HVAC Contractors

The Sauermann SI-CA Integration with measureQuick™

The Sauermann SI-CA 030 and SI-CA 130 combustion analyzers both integrate with the **measureQuick™** app, which, as many of you may know, is testing and job-tracking software. **measureQuick** provides game-changing benefits regarding closing rates, increased revenue, and more.

If you already use **measureQuick** and have the SI-CA-030 or SI-CA-130 combustion test instrument, you need to update the Sauermann app and the analyzers themselves. While you're at it, see if **measureQuick** also needs to be updated. The latest version of the Sauermann app is 1.2.5 for the 030 and 1.1 for the 130.

This integration is exciting news! Not only is a prominent tool manufacturer like Sauermann teamed up with one of the largest industry apps, but they also teamed with the entire HVAC industry.

The data that **measureQuick** can capture from these analyzers benefit the contractor and consumer. It can also potentially be used to combat poor law-making decisions or strengthen current laws.

Can you imagine that you, the craftsmen, the guys and gals who truly care about the people you serve, are protected by laws and/or regulations created by facts, not rainbows and unicorns?

However, it's important to remember that no tool nor app will ever replace the knowledge you gain or have. I am not fond of built-in diagnostics in anything.



You should always use the knowledge in your noggin to diagnose everything you encounter. When you don't know or can't figure out the problem or diagnosis, seek to understand it first. Plenty of guys at National Comfort Institute (NCI) would love to help. All you need to do is ask.

I believe with your NCI **combustion analysis** knowledge, the **Sauermann Analyzer**, and the **measureQuick™** software app all put in proper sequence together; you can knock analysis and closing rates out of the park year-round.

– Casey Contreras, instructor, National Comfort Institute 

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Become the 'ComfortMasters' of Your Community

Not many people have heard of Nicholasville, Kentucky. Unless, of course, you are from Lexington and surrounding areas. But Nicholasville, founded in 1798, is a commuter community for those working in Lexington. The city has grown rapidly, especially in the late 20th Century, and is home to [ComfortMaster, Inc.](#), a \$3.5 million HVAC contracting com-



Butch Mellot

pany that operates primarily (75 to 80%) in the residential space.

Company owner Walter "Butch" Mellot says that he started working for himself back in 1997 or 1998.

"Around that time," Mellot says, "another contractor asked me to run his business in another state. His name was Mickey Click, and though that proposal never worked out (Mickey passed away,) he helped me get started by letting me borrow a service truck for six months before I had to pay for it.

From that point forward, it was just a matter of working hard and growing my customer base throughout Central Kentucky."

In 2003 ComfortMaster was incorporated, and Butch Mellot never looked back.

TIGHT DUCTS MOVE AIR BEST

From the beginning of his career in the HVAC trades, Mellot says he used mastic and sealed ducts long before these practices became part of the local codes. "I needed tight ducts to get the air where it needed to go," he adds.

He laughs about how his suppliers told him that he used more mastic than everyone else combined in those early days!

"Understanding airflow also helped me to better size HVAC systems."

He adds that it wasn't as if he knew everything about airflow. He says he knew it was essential and made it a quest to be a student for his entire career.

EDUCATION HELPED

Like many High-Performance HVAC Contractors we've spotlighted in these pages, Butch Mellot is a big believer in training and education. In fact, before starting ComfortMaster, Butch was an instructor at a local tech school, and he says that in the early days of ComfortMaster, contractors who attended his classes would send him work they couldn't get to or needed help on.

"Those things helped to build my reputation and got me started in the industry as an independent contractor."

Other aspects of his training were his belief in contractor membership organizations like RSES (which he joined in the mid-1990s) and NATE after that.

"I ended up becoming the local RSES chapter president, and was the state association president for a couple of years. There is no doubt the things I learned through RSES, and then National Comfort Institute (NCI) helped my business grow," he states.

ComfortMaster, Inc. became an NCI member in 2009, and Mellot says that is when he truly began to understand the science behind proper airflow.

CUSTOMER SERVICE FIRST

Other growth factors include a focus on serving customers first and foremost. Mellot says that when you focus on customers first, you don't have to worry about money. That is a natural by-product. Focused customer service is a philosophy and market approach each of the 21 employees is trained to provide. The entire team practices this approach, from field technicians to dispatchers and office personnel in every contact with customers.

Butch will be the first to tell you that not every customer walks away completely satisfied, but he says the company makes every effort to do what is right and resolve customer issues.

"The key to this approach is airflow," he says. "On each system we replace, we evaluate the ductwork, test it, and measure. We are not in business to sell boxes. We base recommendations on what we find. Then we let the customer decide what they want to do."

Mellot adds that on the business's



The ComfortMaster Team consists of 21 employees who serve both commercial and residential customers.

replacement side, they reinforce this approach through regular meetings and training.

He says, “Customer service first means training. We do a lot of in-house training. Our state requires continuing education, so we take care of that expense for our team as well as their license expense. I always try to send our technicians to factory schools. And, of course, technical training from NCI is critical.”

BUILDING FROM WITHIN

Another aspect of the ComfortMaster approach is building a solid team of technicians and promoting from within the company. For example, he hired a young woman named Brittany McClanahan as a dispatcher, who was very good at that job.

“She had a propensity and attitude to learn. And she wanted to grow beyond dispatching. So I started working with her on duct design. Today she designs and sells residential construction jobs. Being in this position has worked out very well. The builders like working with her, and she is pleased

with the challenges this job provides.”

Even when it comes to sales, Mellot builds from within. In fact, there are no salespeople. He says everyone sells.

“Between me, the residential manager, the commercial manager, and our service technicians, we all sell,” he says. It’s a team effort. In my experience, many customers prefer when one of us comes out rather than having a salesperson call on them. We’re an all-hands-on-deck team working together to complete the job.”

Mellot adds that his technicians do not mind selling, which isn’t always true with other contracting firms.

“We make it easy for them, and we teach them not to hard-sell anything,” he explains. “We provide them with flat rate books so they can put together systems, price them, and sell them. But that comes AFTER they examine and test the systems, discover customers’ issues, then put together some options to address those issues.”

CHALLENGES FROM WITHOUT

Every contracting company is impacted by external challenges, from

government regulations to building code issues, supply chain issues, and more. For Butch Mellot and his team, that is all in a day’s work until the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Mellot says that changed everything.

“Initially, the pandemic shut us down for three weeks, but then HVAC contracting was classified as an essential service. A lot of the construction work slowed down, but it did continue. We had a tough time getting any maintenance and service work done.”

He says the shutdown impacted both sides of his business because everything and everyone was closed.

“For any open businesses, they were hesitant to have someone coming in. Nobody wanted contact with anybody.”

But the struggle also impacted his employees. He says the field crews didn’t like the idea of going into different locations all day.

“We lost some employees because they felt like the chance of exposure to COVID was too strong. Some misinterpreted the laws and what the government was saying during the shutdown. They were content with the idea



of being unemployed rather than being exposed to the chance of getting the COVID infection.”

Today Mellot says the company still feels the effects of “long COVID.” None of the people who quit came back once everything re-opened.

“We struggled through and eventually replaced them. We kept going. It wasn’t until around six months later when the shutdowns impacted materials and equipment availability, and supply chain issues continue to be a struggle today.

For example, I quoted a project recently, and my supplier told me the product wouldn’t be available for 72 weeks! So, I had to redesign that project and double the number of unitary items to achieve the same outcome as the original design. But I was able to get the equipment in the new design. Even so, we still experienced a two-month delay getting in the motors necessary for the project.

“There are still some items that continue to have supply chain issues. Electric motors seem to be the biggest issue right now.”

RECRUITING IS HARDER

“Since COVID hit,” Mellot continues, “we’ve been in constant catch-up

mode. We continue to fall behind in getting projects on the books because of the lack of personnel. At this point, I’m probably 30% short of personnel. The result is forcing us to have four to six weeks of project lead time.”

To counter that, ComfortMaster redoubled its effort to recruit new technicians through its association with a local trade school. Two of his employees, including Brittany McClanahan, are instructors there, and he served on the school’s advisory board.

“This is one of our biggest windows of opportunity to recruit employees,” he says. “The problem is, nearly 80% of the students I hire from the school get stolen from ComfortMaster because someone is willing to pay them more than their experience and training allow.

“That shows you how bad the skilled workforce issue is now in our area.”

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Because ComfortMaster is a high-performance HVAC firm, they have built a reputation for being able to solve the unsolvable. They are **The ComfortMasters** of their community. Mellot says most of their leads come from word-of-mouth recommendations.

“We’ve gained a reputation as problem solvers, and we get a lot of calls from people with balance issues, humidity control struggles, moisture problems, and so on. As a result, I don’t need to do much advertising.

For example, Mellot says ComfortMaster gets a lot of work from builders who have issues with projects they’ve built or are in the middle of building. They are also called in when a builders’ customer has a problem.

“More often than not, customer issues stem from duct design issues,” he says.

And then there is the health and safety aspect of ComfortMaster’s work. Mellot says most of his technicians are trained in combustion safety and carry personal carbon monoxide (CO) monitors on every call.

He explains that they test every building that has gas appliances in them.

“We also carry CO monitors on the trucks so the techs can offer them to customers,” Mellot adds. “We check installed CO monitors and smoke detectors during shoulder seasons and replace the batteries as part of our maintenance and inspection procedures.



“All these things help us to build a strong reputation of trust and expertise. They provide us the opportunity to correct issues of concern from a health and safety standpoint as well as provide a revenue opportunity. Most other contractors in our area don’t do these things,” he says.

THE STRUGGLES ARE REAL – SO ARE OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the workforce, supply chain, and other issues they face, Mellot says there are many opportunities for continued growth.

“Growth requires dedication, an investment in continual training, creativity, and focus. Opportunities are tempered only by the lack of a skilled workforce,” Mellot explains. “Oppor-



tunities also come from the networks you build, and for us, our investment in training through NCI has also helped us build a network of like-minded fellow contractors around the country.

“NCI membership provides terrific educational opportunities and helps to keep us up with the pulse of the industry. High-Performance HVAC Contracting training changes your perspective on how to look at and analyze customer HVAC issues. It goes beyond equipment problems and demonstrates how the HVAC system impacts customer health and safety. Comfort is only part of the equation.

“Anyone in the HVAC business today needs to align themselves with one or two trade organizations like NCI, RSES, BPI, and other groups. This way they have a constant source of new information and can keep up with industry changes. These things help us to be, what we call, the ‘ComfortMasters’ of our market area.

“It’s also important to remember that learning is a continuous process. When you stop learning and trying to better yourself in the industry, you will fall behind quickly,” Mellot concludes.

For these and many other reasons, the **High-Performance HVAC Today** team has chosen to shine the spotlight on **ComfortMaster, Inc.** Congratulations to Butch Mellot and the entire ComfortMaster team. NCI

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COMBUSTION BRAIN TEASER

National Comfort Institute (NCI) training covers as many combustion problems as possible on equipment in the field. They created diagnostic charts for many different types of equipment. However, there will always be situations in the field that don't conform to these charts.

When the measurements we get don't fall into charted areas, what should we do? It is important to note that we are talking about measurements outside NCI and possibly industry standards.

The following problem arises in this area.

THE SCENARIO

An HVAC contractor finds the following after servicing a condensing furnace and doing a **combustion test** on a two-pipe installation – The combustion test measurements are as follows:

COMBUSTION MEASUREMENTS		
O ₂	Flue Temperature	CO
10.4%	95°F	140 PPM
10.4%	95°F	140 PPM
10.4%	95°F	140 PPM

The NCI Combustion charts show that:

- O₂ should be between 6% to 9%
- Flue temperature between 100 and 140°F
- CO should be less than 100 PPM.

The O₂ and CO should be stable, as show above.

The O₂ and flue temperature indicate an underfired condition. The NCI diagnostic sheets show that the CO reading cannot specifically identify an underfired problem. This is because **underfiring** can cause CO to be high, over 100 PPM or zero PPM, or anywhere in between. So the contractor called me for help.

Because the CO is above 100 PPM in this case,

one way to determine if underfiring is causing the situation is to raise the gas pressure slightly. I asked the contractors to do that, and the new combustion readings were:

NEW COMBUSTION MEASUREMENTS		
O ₂	Flue Temperature	CO
9.5%	100°F	250 PPM
9.5%	100°F	250 PPM
9.5%	100°F	250 PPM

These results show that it wasn't underfiring, causing increased CO. The CO is over 100 PPM and stable. That only leaves a DAM problem – **Dirt/Alignment/Mechanical**.

WHAT IS THE DAM PROBLEM?

The contractor had just cleaned the furnace. He removed the burners, cleaned them, and carefully replaced them. But is it possible one of them might be off just a little?

In this scenario, the furnace had a sealed burner box, so the cover needed to be removed to see the burners and flames. I asked the contractor to remove the cover and do a visual inspection. What happened next might be considered weird. Here are his next set of measurements with the cover off:

NEXT COMBUSTION MEASUREMENTS		
O ₂	Flue Temperature	CO
9.5%	100°F	40 PPM
9.5%	100°F	40 PPM
9.5%	100°F	40 PPM

The O₂ reading remained the same. CO dropped to an acceptable range and was stable. No change in the O₂ reading indicates the

amount of air entering the furnace stayed the same and eliminates combustion air as the problem.

But wait! The NCI Diagnostic Chart already eliminates combustion air as a problem on a condensing furnace. How can removing the burner box door fix a DAM problem?

When identifying combustion air problems, NCI defines it as a misdirection of combustion air, not the lack of it. NCI also says combustion air affects all burners and equipment in the same room, but that definition goes out the window in the case of sealed combustion.

WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION FOR THIS CONDITION?

The first time I saw this was also on a two-pipe condensing furnace. The difference was the outside combustion air was piped into the side of the burner box rather than the top and middle. The CO readings were near 1000 PPM!

Adjusting the gas pressure lower diluted the CO readings but did not lower them to an acceptable range. After removing the burner box cover to inspect the burners and the flames, the furnace came back on, and the CO readings were less than 20 PPM and stable.

The contractor placed the cover back on the burner box while the furnace was still running, and the CO rose back up. He took it back off, and the CO went back down. What was happening?

I determined that because of the combustion air location in the side of the furnace, most of the air was going to the closest burners. Not enough air was getting to the farthest burner. How does this happen? When the

cover is on, you can't see all the burners. When the cover is off, everything is open to the same amount of air, and there is no problem.

Okay, it was an educated guess. We know how draft hoods can pull flue gases from some heat exchangers, but not all of them. Why couldn't a draft inducer create a similar problem with air?

Back to the question as to why there wasn't rising CO? Answer: There was enough draft through the heat exchanger to remove all the flue gases but not enough to bring in enough combustion air to the burners.

COMBUSTION AIR OR A MECHANICAL PROBLEM?

Was this a misdirected combustion air issue or a mechanical problem? I would say it could fall into both categories. On the other hand, I would consider this a design flaw and put it in the DAM category.

So it doesn't matter why this is happening. What matters is what we do

about it. After all the service work, the O₂% is above 9%, and CO is above 100 PPM. The measurements are close and definitely within industry standards.

Economically is it worth spending more time trying to get this furnace within NCI standards? The answer is no. We must realize that as contractors, our job is to make the equipment do what it can do based on its own rating. Therefore, in this case, we have done our best.

Is it okay for the O₂ to be below 6% or for the gas pressure to be lower than 3.5-in.? Any measurement is acceptable if that is what the equipment requires. 



Jim Davis is the senior instructor for National Comfort Institute (NCI). He has a long and storied career in the HVAC Industry. Today he is considered one of the foremost authorities on airflow's impact on combustion and carbon

monoxide safety. If you have questions, you can contact him, at ncilink.com/ContactMe.





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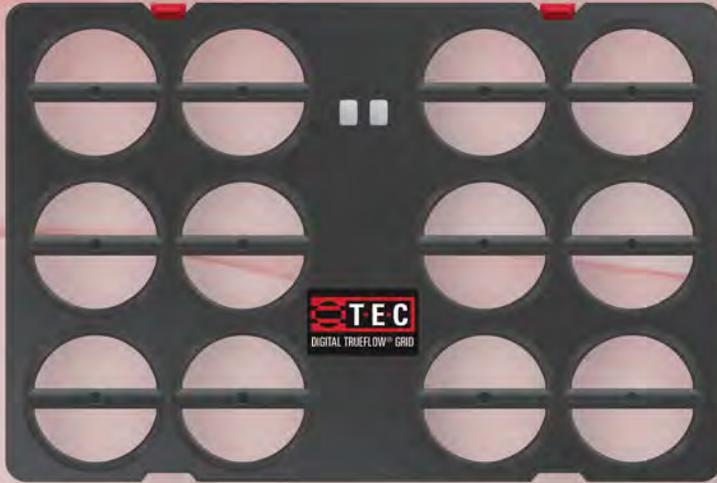
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Getzschman: A Tale of Business Succession and Partnerships

For more than six decades, [Getzschman Heating](#) has been an enduring presence in the heart of Fremont, Nebraska. My father started the HVAC, plumbing, and electrical company out of our garage back in 1960. Since then we've kept the focus on putting our customers and community first.



Left to right: Ron and Scott Getzschman

As any business owner knows, there comes a time when you need to plan for your retirement while also considering the importance of the legacy and team you will leave behind. Ready for the next chapter of their lives, my parents sold the business in 1998.

In my opinion, the sale didn't end well. The company that bought us was backed by Wall-street investment firms only focused on quarterly earnings statements. As a result, every quarter felt like a fire drill to ensure we put our best financial foot forward, which meant sacrificing our core values in the process. This wasn't the legacy my parents envisioned for Getzschman.

In 2004, my brothers Ron, David, and I repurchased our business with a renewed focus on bringing the company back to its roots and finding a partner committed to seeing it flourish. With our sights set on growth, our pivotal

partnership alongside [National Comfort Institute](#) (NCI) began.

HARD LESSONS LEARNED

The exit strategy that my parents followed left a bad taste in our mouths. The lesson that my brothers and I learned was that we needed to put together a better "retirement" plan.

However, there was a bright spot from the original sale. We had the opportunity to form strategic relationships with two other HVAC companies who had weathered similar circumstances to ours. Every fall, we would come together to discuss and share insights on growth, personnel management, training, and marketing strategies.

These sessions also laid the groundwork for tackling one of the most complex aspects of business ownership that we had yet to implement: crafting a successful exit strategy.

FINDING OUR IDEAL PARTNER

This time around we knew exactly what we wanted and didn't want in a future buyer. In 2020, we turned to professionals for help and partnered with a [Florida-based consulting company](#) that specialized in mergers and acquisitions to guide us through every step of the process.

After gathering all our business documents, financial statements, and organizational charts, we were ready to start negotiations.

We wanted to sell to a company with similar market approaches, business philosophies, and a service mentality to those held by Getzschman Heating. We were fortunate and blessed to have found such a company early in our search, and ultimately, we entered into an agreement with [TurnPoint Services](#).



in them and the direction they're taking the company.

With TurnPoint, Getzschman has a partner to work with and discuss all the challenges.

But partnership is a two-way street. If you're going to make this work, you must be willing to continue to work in the business for at least a few more years after the sale to make the transition successful for your entire team. This includes the buyer.

I plan to stay with the company for another five or 10 years. My brother intends to remain involved for three to five years. With TurnPoint's help, this plan gives us time to put systems and people in place to guarantee Getzschman and its employees succeed and continue to prosper when we finally do step down.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSION

My takeaways from this experience are that owner retirement requires a lot of planning and a solid strategy. No contractor should try to do this entirely on their own. Always find a professional to help you put that plan together. In our case, our consulting firm was a godsend.

The next bit of advice involves the business itself. To prepare for a sale,

you must clean up your house. You can't blend personal and business spending.

You must run the company as a business. This may be the most challenging part of exit strategy preparation.

And finally, be honest with yourself and your partners. Decide what your endgame looks like and work back from there. For us, ensuring our team and customers are taken care of to the best of our ability was first and foremost, and that meant not only partnering with our buyer, but taking time to make a successful long-term transition.

In the end, this has truly been a very rewarding experience. In our situation, we're blessed that we found a partner like TurnPoint Services, and we foresee a strong future for Getzschman Heating long after the current management team retires. **NCI**



Scott Getzschman and his brother Ron recently sold their HVAC contracting firm — **Getzschman Heating LLC**, Fremont, NE. Both will remain part of the management team to help the company transition.

Getzschman employs 86 people and serves the HVAC commercial, residential, service, and new construction markets. To reach Scott, go to ncilink.com/ContactMe.

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High-Performance HVAC IS Our Brand

As a High-Performance HVAC Contractor, one of the most challenging things we do is try to [educate the public](#) in our marketplace on what that means. For years we have tried to market the testing and training we do to differentiate ourselves from our many competitors in our market area.

Our lead generation from this approach was not great. Furthermore, many of our competitors went out of their way to tell customers the services [DiMarco and Associates](#) provides are just a way for us to boost prices and make more money.

But as a company, we are focused on total system performance. That is all about quality control and quality assurance. But how do you tell your customer base about it?

This is particularly an issue for a contracting firm that does both commercial and residential work. That's two different audiences and two different messaging approaches.

For us, the key is for clients to get results they want without facing a lot of *technospeak* by our technicians. This is primarily true on the residential side of our business. Commercial customers tend to be more engineering-oriented and may want to hear technical details and all the options available.

DO THE RIGHT THING

Our focus on the business's commercial and residential sides is to [do things right the first time](#). It's to eliminate taking shortcuts and look for problem solutions that provide customers with the most value for the dollars they invest with us.

This approach means ensuring we have the right return duct drop, the right filter set up, selecting the right coil, then programming the fan properly.

Doing these things has shown an average of 15 to 20% improvement on almost every job.

We find that contractors who don't have this focus have issues with the systems they install. Many of these issues are airflow-related, and we get calls to correct them. Without our testing and measuring processes, we wouldn't discover things like having a wrong air cleaner application that chokes airflow at the air handling unit.

In fact, many calls involve correcting issues with how coils were originally installed, fan speeds that were set incorrectly, and more. At DiMarco and Associates, we call these issues "near-furnace" problems. We haven't even begun looking at the overall duct system.

Doing the right thing means learning what that is. Most of the time, installers for many of our competitors don't know or understand the [impact of airflow on system performance](#). Why? Because most have no training in the importance of airflow. And if they are trained, they've never entirely held themselves accountable by testing after they finish an installation.

Testing in and testing out on every system you encounter is the only way to prove your work and ensure the system is operating correctly. That is how I define doing the right thing.

THE 'WHY' BEHIND OUR BRAND

At DiMarco and Associates, we pride ourselves on helping our team understand [the why](#) behind performance testing. Frankly, if the installers don't know why you want them to do something, they won't do it.

In my experience, the one thing the HVAC Industry seems to be dialed into is the "why" behind the refrigerant circuit. Over the decades, most HVAC equipment manufacturers have beat

that into all our heads.

If you're charging correctly off their charts, using superheat or subcooling, that is only a small part of doing things right.

What happens if a system moves only 3.5 tons of conditioned air with a five-ton system? If you don't know why this is happening, you'll change your design to an incorrect airflow reading. If you fix that airflow, you've got to adjust and certainly retest your refrigerant circuit.

Your field service and installation teams need to understand the relationship of airflow to refrigerant charge.

BRANDING WITH MEASURED RESULTS

Even if everyone is following the processes of High-Performance HVAC Contracting, you must still find a way to explain what it all means to the customer. Providing that explanation can be the most challenging part of understanding the 'Why.'

We work on helping our team show customers the meaning of measured results. When a customer has a real comfort or efficiency problem that typically results from airflow problems, they will decide to fix it. They want to act. They need information.

When we follow the high-performance process, the results are usually on the money.

It's incredible what you hear from customers afterward. They often tell us that they never thought that one room could ever be comfortable. Plus, they can see how their system performed before and after our work and know their investment was worth it.

On a recent job, we encountered



something known as "ghosting." This is when your tech discovers black streaks on baseboards, carpets, and walls near electrical sockets. Temperature differentials and duct leakage cause it. Customers often say, "Every time I clean, these streaks show back up."

In this case, a homeowner was so frustrated by the continual re-appearance of ghost streaks that she wasn't sure she believed we could make them disappear by sealing all the ductwork. We couldn't have told her that if we didn't measure and test the airflow, find the leaks, and know the right course of action. We had the numbers to back that course of action up. She was amazed because once done, she never again got the discoloration on her baseboards and walls.

CURRENT TRENDS, CURRENT ISSUES

Despite having a solid, identifiable brand as a high-performance contrac-

tor in my market area, I would be remiss if I didn't mention how the industry's current state is throwing up more roadblocks than I've seen in all my 18 years of business.

In the last 12 months alone, massive changes have shaken the HVAC Industry and the overall U.S. economy, and we are feeling every shock wave as they race over us.

From the last remnants of the pandemic that still impact our supply chains – both commercial and residential – to the mandated changes in refrigerants that began on January 1st, to the impact of high inflation, interest rates, and other costs of doing business, I find contractors throughout my market area are fighting for every nickel. Many typically well-balanced companies are dropping their prices by 25 to 30 % just to get some business.

Customers are struggling on both sides of our business: commercial companies face empty buildings, higher costs, and strict budget constraints,

Performance

forcing them to make decisions based only on price and product availability. Residential consumers don't have the discretionary funds to replace equipment with properly sized products onto working duct systems. They, too, want fast, inexpensive repairs that may cost them more money in the long run.

Even without doing the testing and measuring that our high-performance approach requires, residential replacement equipment costs have skyrocketed. Air conditioning units that once cost \$10,000 to replace now cost between \$13,000 and \$15,000. If we perform testing and measurements followed up with air upgrades and duct renovations, those costs go up by more than \$3,000!

Other issues that impact our busi-

ness is the high cost of interest on lines of credit, supplier strictness regarding on-time payments, workforce issues, and more make it more difficult than ever to be in this business today.

Make no mistake. Current trends create current issues for all of us.

THE GOLD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

The good news is that though these issues create cash flow and other problems in the short term, they also open doors to other opportunities if you continue offering high-performance services and solving customer problems. Our brand and reputation are helping us weather these current storms and are setting the stage for tomorrow's opportunities. At least for the team here

at DiMarco, the key is facing the hard truths of today's environment and setting the groundwork for tomorrow.

There will always be opportunities. Our job, as I see it, is to pivot when necessary to accommodate customer needs now, then refocus on processes and approaches that built our reputation in the first place. 



Ben DiMarco owns **DiMarco and Associates**, a \$5 million+ **commercial and residential contracting firm** operating in the Northeastern Ohio marketing area. DiMarco is a longtime practitioner of High-Performance

HVAC contracting who sees the training and practice as a return to craftsmanship and a servant leader dedicated to customers. He can be reached at ncilink.com/ContactMe.



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*Survey ends Sept. 29, 2023. Winner will be notified via email. Winner responsible for travel and lodging. No cost for entering, one entry per person.

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SUMMIT 2024 REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN



Ladies and Gentlemen – The [High-Performance HVAC Summit 2024](#) registration site is now open. So many good things are coming down the pike, but you need to register to hold your spot.

First, the details: Summit 2024 will be held at the Crowne Plaza Asheville in Asheville, NC, from **September 10-13, 2024**. This hotel is nestled between the Great Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains, and is a pet-friendly property near downtown Asheville.

Besides being a premier spot for our event, it is also a destination city offering you, your team, and your families access to many great things to do, including walkable neighborhoods with an array of independent shops, craft breweries, and some of the best dining options in the southeast.

Register Today! Click this link to start: gotosummit.com/summit-registration. Early registrants get several bonuses, including access to the **FULL 2023 SUMMIT RECORDINGS**.

If you missed the 2023 event, these recordings will provide you with many hours of great ideas from the breakout sessions, the general sessions, and more. But you must register for 2024 by December 31, 2023, to get this access.

Also, if you register before the deadline, you will receive the Early Bird discount and save hundreds off your team's

registration. NCI members and premium members receive additional discounts, and can use NCI Bucks to pay down the cost AND earn NCI Bucks on the dollars they spend (saving even more).

Discounted Hotel room reservations within the NCI block open in September, 2023.

If you have questions, call your Customer Care Representative at **800-633-7058**.

THE VALUE OF ONSITE TRAINING

Many HVAC contractors are discovering the value of bringing NCI training onsite to their facilities. The same [NCI Certification](#) training we offer all year can be delivered right to your doorstep.



This flexible and cost effective option is ideal for training a group or launching a company-wide implementation of new services. Plus, because we come to you, there are virtually no travel expenses and your employees spend more time training with NCI instructors.

You'll also save on productivity costs as field work and large projects won't be put on hold. NCI training can be delivered as our standard curriculum or completely customized to match the training goals for your team.

Think about setting up [onsite training](#) for your team this fall. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Call **800-633-7058** and learn more how onsite training can help you and your team.

DID YOU KNOW ... ABOUT AIRMAXX LITE™?

Are you aware that National Comfort Institute (NCI) has developed a mobile

app called AirMaxx Lite™? This app does not require a data plan but allows you to enter your HVAC system test measurements and then calculate and "grade" the system.

AirMaxx Lite™ is a free-version of AirMaxx™, a full service mobile app available to National Comfort Institute members. AirMaxx Lite doesn't do everything that the full version does, but can still help your field team calculate TESP (Total External Static Pressure) and communicate HVAC equipment delivery performance relative to its rated static pressure.

By the way, your raw measurement inputs and resulting calculation values are displayed on screen for verification.

AirMaxx Lite is available for both Android-based and iOS mobile devices. Its interface allows easy data entry and easy-to-display reports for you to share with homeowners.



If you are an NCI member, you automatically have access to the AirMaxx app. Airmaxx does everything that AirMaxx Lite does, plus it helps you calculate pressure drop across coils and air filters.

It also helps calculate supply and return duct static pressure, and much more.

Learn more about AirMaxx Lite at airmaxxlite.com.

Questions? We have the answers. Call your Customer Care Representative at **800-633-7058**.



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Fortitude: Strength in the Face of Adversity



Dominick Guarino is publisher of *High-Performance HVAC Today* magazine and CEO of National Comfort Institute, Inc. He can be reached at ncilink.com/ContactMe

Every business leader and their team constantly face putting out fires every day. No matter how organized or prepared we are, challenges will always pop up. Certainly, having systems and processes in place help your people navigate the many unknowns of your business.

The true test however, is when something out of left field blindsides you and your team.

If you read “*One More Thing*” last month, you’ll know that NCI recently moved its headquarters from Northeast Ohio to Morristown, Tennessee. During this process we’ve had several blindsiding experiences that tested both me personally and our team.

DISASTER #1

Besides the usual challenges associated with moving both my home and NCI headquarters to Tennessee, my first blindsiding challenge was caused by the upstairs HVAC system of my new home.

We were in the middle of moving and it got pretty hot here in late June. I decided it was time to turn on the upstairs unit (which is located in the attic above the first floor) to help cool things down. I left the unit running and headed back to Ohio to load up for the final move.

When my wife and I drove back, we were welcomed home to a soaked master bathroom and closet ceiling (which eventually caved in).

Apparently, the previous homeowner had someone “work” on the condensate drainage system. They left a dead condensate pump disconnected, and low and behold no one ever installed a shutoff sensor in the drain pan - nor did the pan have a secondary drain on it. Long story short, both rooms need to be completely gutted and renovated, and are unusable.

We are currently living in a secondary bedroom

and using another bedroom as our “closet.” We won’t be able to use the master suite for months.

In addition, we can’t turn on the upstairs air conditioning until it is replaced as it turns out the paper-thin drain pan leaks like a sieve, so the system needs to be repaired or more likely, replaced.

In the meantime, the entire upstairs has also been unlivable with the soaring August temperatures. Needless to say, things got pretty stressful, pretty quick. The key was staying calm and remembering that “this too shall pass.”

DISASTER #2

At the same time, we were moving the entire contents of NCI’s headquarters and training center buildings to Tennessee. Things seemed to be going along pretty well. We set up our new video studio for our first online class in mid-August - live from Tennessee! David Richardson was coming in to teach our online recertification class with more than 50 students. All was good.

Then disaster hit again! The morning of the online training we entered our new building to the sound of what I can only describe as a waterfall.

In a panic we headed downstairs to the training center only to step into 3 inches of water! The entire 5,000 sq. ft. floor was flooded! The main water line had broken directly over our main classroom and was shooting out water at 100 lbs of pressure over the drop ceiling which had mostly collapsed from the weight.

We eventually got the water shut off and began to assess the extensive damage to our training room, hands-on lab, and video studio.

Once we got over the initial shock, we realized our online class was to start in a little over an hour. What happened next is where the team really shined. 

Go to ncilink.com/Strength2 to continue.



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UPCOMING NCI TRAINING SCHEDULE

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Combustion Performance and Carbon Monoxide Safety Certification Program

September 6-8: Lansing, MI **SOLD OUT**
 September 6-8: Centennial, CO **SOLD OUT**
 September 12-14: Kimberly, WI
 September 19-21: Monroeville, PA
 September 19-21: West Allis, WI
 September 19-21: Austin, TX
 September 26-28: Richmond, VA
 September 26-28: Chesapeake, VA
 September 26-28: Milwaukee, WI
 October 3-5: Plymouth, MN
 October 3-5: Fenton, MO

Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing Certification Bundle

September 6-8: Fenton, MO
 October 3-5: Louisville, KY
 October 3-5: Glen Burnie, MD

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics

September 12: Kissimmee, FL
 September 13: Kissimmee, FL
 September 26: Wheeling, IL
 September 27: Wheeling, IL

Commercial Air Balancing Certification Program

September 12-14: Sacramento, CA **SOLD OUT**
 October 3-5: Las Vegas, NV

PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING (cont.)

Duct System Optimization and Air Balancing Certification Program

September 12-14: Portland, OR
 September 19-21: Fife, WA
 October 10-12: Spokane, WA

Commercial System Performance Certification Program

September 26-27: West Allis, WI

PUBLIC ONLINE LIVE TRAINING

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics - ONLINE LIVE

September 6-7

Residential Air-Side Recertification - ONLINE LIVE

September 19-20

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Hydronic Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing
 September 6-7: Anaheim, CA **SOLD OUT**

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics

September 12: Anaheim, CA
 October 3: Tulare, CA

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics Implementation Workshop

September 13-14: Anaheim, CA

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Refrigerant-Side Performance Certification Program

September 27-28: Anaheim, CA

Test & Certify Ventilation Systems and Economizers Certification Program

October 4-5: Tulare, CA

Duct System Optimization and Air Balancing Certification Program

October 10-12: Anaheim, CA

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Airflow Testing and Diagnostics

September 19: Fresno, CA
 September 19: Sacramento, CA
 October 3: Anaheim, CA

Refrigerant-Side Performance Certification Program

September 20-21: Fresno, CA
 September 20-21: Sacramento, CA
 October 4-5: Anaheim, CA

Residential HVAC System Performance & Electrification

October 10-12: Fresno, CA

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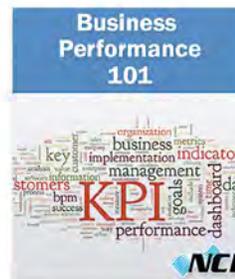
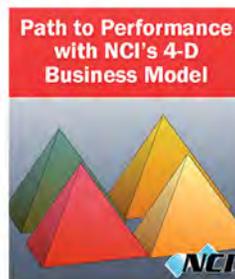
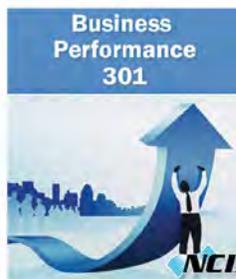
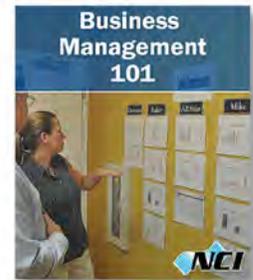
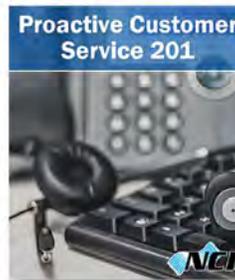
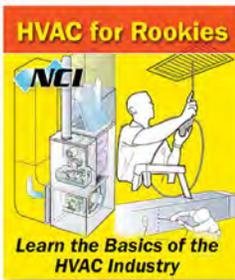
These courses are focused on helping your organization succeed and grow, at your pace. If you're just starting out, or have been in business for decades, there's training that you will find helpful on your path to performance.

Some Benefits of NCI's Online University Training:

- Training is available any day, any time, 24/7
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- Supports a High-Performance HVAC Contracting™ culture
- Training available from fundamentals to advanced courses.

NCI'S ONLINE UNIVERSITY

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