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DISTRIBUTORS' Role in Training the Contractor of Today and Tomorrow

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- **R.E. Michel Focuses on Training Their Customers**
- **Educate Customers During Home Shows**
- **Why Airflow Testing and Diagnostics is the Right Thing to Do**

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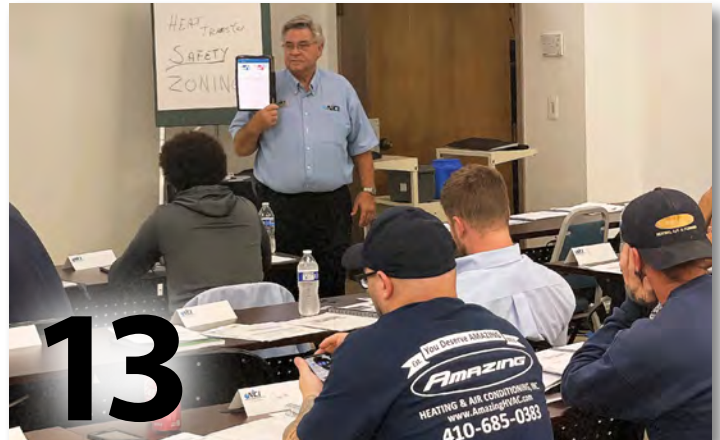


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Changes ... Turn and Face the Strange ... *From Slight to Full Flammable Refrigerants*



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

In 1971, singer/songwriter David Bowie penned the anthem, “Changes” to address his personal and artistic reinvention in an effort to distance himself from mainstream rock-and-roll. It became one of his most beloved songs. The lyrics also became a mantra for young people about the importance of facing changes, which can be strange, overwhelming, and yet sometimes gateways to opportunities.

From my perspective, this idea applies to our industry. After all, the HVAC universe is in a constant state of evolution and change. Contractors face an onslaught of challenges from government regulations, technological advancements, and marketplace conditions.

One huge change today is the introduction of A2L refrigerant-based residential and light commercial equipment into the mix of products that contractors sell and service. This category of slightly flammable refrigerants is already being

HVAC Industry distributors can really help. They can step up and help their customers come to grips with these changes by training them on the proper ways to install and service equipment that use these refrigerants.


Distributors can help contractors understand the differences between A2Ls and R-410A refrigerants. They can teach technicians what light flammability means, techniques for handling, storing, and transporting it, and other tips to help keep themselves and their customers safe.

For some background about servicing R-32-based equipment, read Contractor Roman Baugh’s procedural basics in the article, [A2L Refrigerants: Contractor Knowledge is Power](#).

But wait, there’s more. Even though we are still at the beginning of replacing current refrigerants with A2Ls, it won’t be long before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other government entities begin pushing to replace them with A2 and A3 flammable refrigerants, which will completely change the landscape of how the HVAC Industry works.

Once again, distributors play a key role in preparing contractors to deal with those regulations by developing training on how to work with A2 and A3 refrigerants as well.

No one in this industry should face these changes alone. As the adage says, it takes a village. This industry — from manufacturers to distributors to contractors — is one of the most flexible and adoptive *villages* there is.

From mildly flammable to flammable refrigerants, it’s “time to face the strange,” as Bowie writes. And I believe HVAC distributors are essential in helping their HVAC contractor customers to not only best deal with these changes, but also open the door to new opportunities. 

BY PROVIDING TRAINING, DISTRIBUTORS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN HELPING HVAC CONTRACTORS DEAL WITH THE REFRIGERANT CHANGES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW.

produced and sold throughout the U.S. and yes, it does require a somewhat different tool- and skill-set to install and service equipment using it.

Add to the fact there are different types of A2L refrigerants being used right now: [R-32](#) (the refrigerant of choice for Daikin air conditioning products) and [R-454B](#) (the refrigerant of choice for Johnson Controls, Carrier Corp., and Trane, Inc.). Copeland Corp. is manufacturing compressors that will operate with either R-32 or R-454B.

That means HVAC contractors need training to successfully handle these products.

Confusing? It sure can be. And that is where

Written By HVAC Professionals for HVAC Professionals

WHY WE USE NCI'S ONLINE UNIVERSITY

National Comfort Institute's (NCI) Online University is a group of self-directed video classes provided to supplement the live, in-person classes that NCI teaches. Here at [Progressive Heating](#), we use them as refresher courses for our trained technicians and as a perfect starter kit to help train new employees.

As soon as the university was available, we began weekly 45-minute sessions for our NCI-trained technicians that also included new employees. If you hire new experienced or non-experienced maintenance techs, this is an easy way to properly bring them up to speed.

Furthermore, if you have technicians too shy to ask for help, or you think they need additional training, this is an easy

and inexpensive way to catch them up. The Online University also offers business and customer service training. The [HVAC for Rookies](#) class, for example, takes what can be a very complex business and breaks it down to manageable chunks of info. This shows our office staff the big picture of what HVAC companies do. These classes can be repeated as often as needed, unlike a live class.

By the way, NCI's Online University classes are eligible for great discounts for members. This makes the training even more affordable for us. Non-members can also access this training.



At Progressive, training is one of the ways we invest in our employees and is also an important part of our company's culture.

For more information or to sign up for any of NCI's Online University classes, go to ncilink.com/OnlineU. You can also call **800-633-7058** and ask to speak to a Customer Care Specialist.

— By Greg Wallace, *Progressive Heating, Air and Plumbing* 



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Revisiting the Success of a High-Performance HVAC Contractor

Not many HVAC companies can claim they have been in business for 50 years or more. For those who do, it is a time of celebration and an opportunity to use the past to point to the future. It celebrates a company's values, goals, culture, and brand.

The celebrations for [Hydes Air Conditioning and Heating](#) of Indio, CA, include successes from their professional high-performance HVAC approach to contracting. The fact is, the company was well on its way in 2018 when this publication recognized them in our [May 2018 issue](#).

Back then, Hydes was an \$8 million (gross sales) firm employing 35 people and operating 20 service and installation vehicles. Their focus: residential retrofit and replacement in their market area.

A lot has changed in the following five years, and we thought it would be

interesting to revisit this company and learn how they changed.

TIME AND CHANGES

Michael Hyde, general manager of the company, says that since 2018, the company has more than doubled in size from a gross sales standpoint.

"We've seen a lot of growth since 2018, and with that, profitability," he says. "Going through the pandemic era had the potential to throw us off track. Instead, it was a surprise and boosted our business once the federal government deemed HVAC essential and people started spending money.

"The difficulty came in the form of supply chain issues, making it hard to get equipment," Hyde adds.

Another significant change since the previous spotlight was the addition of an electrical division. Hyde says that just before launching the new division, he and his family stopped doing appliance repair work, which is how their business started in Orange County, CA.

"Appliance repair has been a large part of our business since our company started, but it was no longer growing. Air conditioning in Palm Desert communities was on fire, and we decided to focus on that."

The electrical division opened a door into the commercial marketplace and eventually became a \$1 million business.

While this was happening, another Hydes Air Conditioning business generator went away. Michael Hyde says that the company always made great use of utility rebate programs, and [ACCA's QI](#) (Quality Installation) administered through the state of California was one of them.

"The QI program was subsidized to ensure quality installations of HVAC equipment. That aligned nicely with the [High-Performance HVAC contracting processes](#) that we learn from National Comfort Institute (NCI) in terms of doing better installs, focusing on airflow, and going beyond equipment swap outs," Hyde says.

Unfortunately, sometime after 2018, the funding for that program ended, eliminating a source for much of Hyde's work.

"To compensate for those lost leads, we sold too many boxes. That led to us going through a period of falling out of the practice of High-Performance HVAC."

GETTING BACK TO BASICS

Over the years, despite these setbacks, Hyde says they have managed to grow the company, and today, they field five installation crews and built up their service and maintenance.

"We're a maintenance-driven company because we're in the desert," Hyde continues. "It's hot here longer than in other parts of the country. For example, on October 20th, we're still



The Hyde brothers (left to right): Barry Hyde, Michael Hyde, and Mark Hyde.



doing air conditioning. Sure, we are preparing for the change in weather to our heating season, but we're still heavy into air conditioning.

"When we switch to heat, that's the most popular time in the valley. The weather is great. But it's not great for people buying heating and air conditioning. We rely on our maintenance base."

Unlike many HVAC contractors, at Hydes, the entire service staff does maintenance work. He says that is how they are sustained in the off-season. During the off-season, his team looks for opportunities for duct replacements and duct modifications, one of the benefits of testing and measuring airflow.

Over the years, Hyde says they built their maintenance business to over 5,500 agreements.

"Maintenance happens twice a year. So that'll generate 11,000 calls for routine maintenance that I don't have to market for," Hyde says.

Though he says they don't do much advertising, Hydes stays in touch with their customer base using newsletters, e-mail blasts, etc. This communication is vital to building and managing their maintenance base and, in his

words, its stability.

"I don't lay people off. We don't build up in summer and shrink in winter. We'll keep everybody working. When you do that, you can maintain a stable workforce. The result is that we have a lot of long-term employees."

HYDES AIR CONDITIONING TODAY

Today, the company achieves \$16.4 million in gross sales, around the same as last year. Why? Hyde says that the electrical business began moving in a direction that wasn't working because it wasn't who they were.

"Commercial electrical contracting isn't our forte. It has low margins, and we weren't getting paid. So, in 2023, we stepped back from going after those contracts. We're focusing on the residential business, where we do well."

"That means we gave up around \$1 million in electrical contract sales and are working now to make that up."

Compared to its size in 2018, Hydes today has 50 employees, including five two-person installation crews, an installation manager who can jump in on projects when necessary, and 15 service and maintenance technicians.

The company also still has six electrical service technicians.

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION

Though Michael Hyde says he is not quite ready for retirement, he recognizes the need to "bring up" people from within the business and find young people to come into the business.

He says, "I'm used to being very hands-on and still am. My brothers and I are selling and designing projects, but there's more office work and meetings as we grow. That takes time. We need more help and have begun developing middle managers from within. We are also hiring new people."

"We've had great success bringing in new people at ground level and building them up. For example, when we bring in a new technician, we put them through a lot of training, including NCI classes."

"When they're ready, we send them to get **NATE** certified. We're heavy believers in NATE. Our service guys must be NATE certified. So, if a maintenance tech wants to advance, NATE certification is a goal."

"In the process, I've made an interesting discovery. Some of my best



new hires are younger people. I often hear millennials, Gen Z'ers, and so on have bad work ethics. We find the exact opposite."

According to Hyde, one example is a recent hire – "a 20-year-old tech who looks like he's 12. But he is a sponge for knowledge. He retains what he learns and puts it into practice immediately. This young man is as smart as can be."

Hyde says his team sent the new tech to NCI courses, internal training, and even soft skills training.

"We do this so our techs are better at working with customers and co-workers," he explains.

"Half the battle is being polite, nice, and courteous when doing maintenance work. Do that, and you win the customer. Their equipment isn't broken, so the maintenance techs aren't under the same stress as an emergency repair.

"Also, by using the digital tools we have available, including digital documentation, managers are just a phone call or Facetime call away from helping the new techs in real-time when they encounter problems. And young people are all over that.

"This new kid we hired was so good, I kiddingly asked if he could clone himself or get someone like him to work for us. And he did! We wound up bringing in a few other great young techs, and they are fantastic. They're just picking it up so fast. They're not afraid of the new tools. They are helping us to build up our service and maintenance base.

"Plus, working in maintenance," Hyde adds, "gives our newer field people a lot of experience.

"The result is that they grow very quickly," he continues.

Even Hyde installers who want to

move into service can do it. They undergo the same process – maintenance first, training, and NATE certification.

By doing this, the company now has several former installers working in service, which, according to Hyde, really helps in a pinch during peak periods when they need another installation crew.

He says the former installers are great at volunteering to install when needed. They don't complain or say, *'That's beneath me. I'm a service guy now. I don't do installations.'*

"Talk about creating great team camaraderie! Another benefit of this approach is that we rarely overwork our guys on the installation side. I think that's part of why we have a lot of long, long-tenured people here," Hyde continues.

TRAINING IS THE SECRET WEAPON

Michael Hyde is proud to describe himself as a *lifelong NCI guy*. "I've been to every NCI Summit program. I've won their Small Contractor of the Year award. For us, training is our secret weapon.

"We conduct training nearly every day," Hyde says. "Everyone in the company gets some training, even our office team. We focus on customer service training with them. We'll have technical training. We'll do manufacturer training and NCI classes.

"The industry has seen the value of NCI's High-Performance HVAC training over the years. I recently read something that emphasized how HVAC contractors had to be NATE or NCI certified. This attribution shows


the value of investing in NCI training.

"Over the years, I understood that training is never a one-time deal. You can't go to a class one time and be ready to take on the world because now you're an expert. Training is a continual thing. You need feedback. You need practice. Anyone who says they can't afford the time or cost to train their team is making a huge mistake," Hyde says.

"When it comes to my experience, NCI training has changed the way we do business. In the early days, Rob Falke taught me the importance of continuing education and how the costs of that education must be built into the cost of doing business.

"He also taught me that we should never stop doing what we are good at. Rob told me to start in our comfort zone and work outwards. And he said consistently to do the things that make money. Just add to them. Business is never an all-or-nothing proposition.

"My takeaway from that and many other conversations with Rob and other NCI team members is to do things in steps. In the end, if you treat your employees and your clients well, you will have success."

For these and many other reasons, the team at **Hydes Air Conditioning and Heating** in Indio, CA. Congratulations to Michael Hyde and the entire team. 



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November 7-9: Union City, GA
November 7-9: Morristown, TN
November 28-30: Allentown, PA
December 5-7: Sacramento, CA
December 5-7: Milwaukee, WI

Duct System Optimization and Air Balancing Certification Program

November 14-16: Austin, TX

High-Performance HVAC Design and Redesign

November 28-30: Austin, TX

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics

November 30: Morristown, TN

PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING (cont.)

Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing Certification Bundle

December 5-7: Richmond, VA
December 12-14: Austin, TX

PUBLIC ONLINE LIVE TRAINING

Duct System Optimization Certification Program - ONLINE LIVE

November 14-15: *Part 1*
November 28-29: *Part 2*

Commercial System Performance Certification Program - ONLINE LIVE

December 12-13: *Part 1*
December 19-20: *Part 2*

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Advanced Air & Hydronic Balancing Training Program

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Airflow Testing and Diagnostics

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Airflow Testing & Diagnostics Implementation Workshop

November 29-30: Anaheim, CA

Commercial HVAC System Performance Certification Program

December 4-5: Tulare, CA

Residential HVAC System Performance Certification Program

December 6-7: Tulare, CA

Performance-Based Selling Bootcamp

December 12-14: Anaheim, CA

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December 5-7: Anaheim, CA

Residential HVAC System Performance & Electrification

December 19-21: Anaheim, CA

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Why Airflow Testing & Diagnostics is the Right Thing to Do

“KNOWING TO DO THE RIGHT THING
AND NOT DOING IT IS WRONG.”

My mom would routinely tell me to do the ‘right thing.’ When HVAC technicians and installers are too lazy to check the quality and performance of our work, we are violating our customers’ trust. On average, we install systems delivering only 57% of the comfort our customers paid us. So, when we install 20 SEER equipment, the system only performs at 11.4 SEER.

Regarding residential HVAC systems, ensuring optimal performance isn’t just about comfort – it’s about safety, health, efficiency, and environmental responsibility. In this article, we’ll dive into the world of airflow testing and diagnostics to explore why it’s the right thing to do for HVAC contractors and their customers.

THE HVAC CONTRACTOR’S CHALLENGE

Residential HVAC contractors, often tradespeople with strong technical skills, face a unique challenge. They’re experts at installing and repairing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, but they may not be well-versed in the intricacies of airflow management. This is where airflow testing and diagnostics come into play.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Before delving into why airflow testing is essential, let’s get a handle on the basics. Airflow testing involves measuring the quantity and quality of air moving through an HVAC system. It’s akin to checking a patient’s vital signs before determining a diagnosis and treatment plan. In this case, the “patient” is the HVAC system, and the “vital signs” are the system’s airflow metrics.

WHY IS AIRFLOW TESTING NECESSARY?

- 1. Energy Efficiency:** Inefficient airflow can lead to wasted energy. When an HVAC system struggles to move air effectively, it must work harder to achieve the desired temperature. This extra effort translates to higher energy bills for homeowners. By testing and optimizing airflow, contractors can help customers save money in the long run.
- 2. Comfort and Health:** Proper airflow ensures consistent temperature distribution throughout a home. Without it, some rooms may be too warm while others are too cold. Additionally, inadequate airflow can lead to indoor air quality (IAQ) issues, such as dust and allergen buildup. Ensuring proper airflow can create a healthier living environment.
- 3. System Longevity:** HVAC systems that work under duress due to poor airflow are more likely to break down prematurely. Regular testing and diagnostics can identify potential issues before they escalate, prolonging the system’s lifespan and reducing the need for costly repairs.
- 4. Environmental Impact:** A well-tuned HVAC system is kinder to the environment. Reduced energy consumption means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. By helping homeowners reduce their carbon footprint, HVAC contractors can contribute to a greener planet.

HOW TO PERFORM AIRFLOW TESTING

Airflow testing involves a series of steps. Here’s a simplified overview:

- **Measurement:** Contractors use specialized



tools like [manometers](#) and [flow hoods](#) to measure airflow at various points in the HVAC system, including supply and return vents.

- **Analysis:** The collected data from the above measurements are then analyzed to determine if the system delivers the required airflow for heating or cooling needs.
- **Adjustments:** If airflow falls short of expectations, adjustments become necessary. These adjustments might involve cleaning or replacing filters, resizing ducts, or recalibrating the blower fan.
- **Verification:** Finally, another round of testing confirms that the adjustments effectively improved airflow.

THE BENEFITS FOR HVAC CONTRACTORS

For HVAC contractors, incorporating airflow testing and diagnostics into their service offerings can lead to several advantages:

1. **Competitive Edge:** Offering comprehensive HVAC services, including airflow testing, sets contractors apart from the competition.

Customers are more likely to choose a contractor who can provide a holistic solution.

2. **Customer Satisfaction:** Homeowners enjoy better comfort and lower energy bills when HVAC systems operate optimally. Satisfied customers are more likely to become repeat clients and refer the contractor to others.
3. **Reduced Callbacks:** Proper airflow testing can prevent issues that lead to callbacks and warranty claims. Such testing saves contractors time and money.
4. **Professionalism:** Demonstrating a commitment to airflow testing and diagnostics shows professionalism and a dedication to providing the best service possible.

EDUCATING CUSTOMERS

Contractors also play an essential role in educating homeowners about the importance of airflow testing. Many homeowners are unaware of the impact of airflow on their HVAC systems. By explaining the benefits of testing and offering it as a service,

contractors can empower customers to make informed decisions about their heating and cooling systems.

IN CONCLUSION

Airflow testing and diagnostics are not just technical details; they are the key to unlocking a range of benefits for both High-Performance HVAC contractors and their customers.

The advantages are clear, from energy efficiency and cost savings to improved comfort and system longevity. By making airflow testing a standard practice, HVAC contractors can elevate their services and build a reputation for excellence.

It's not just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do. **NCI**

Jim Ball has been involved in the HVAC industry all his life. He's been a long-time National Comfort Institute (NCI) shining star and an effective implementer of High-Performance HVAC. He sold his family HVAC service company and now gives back by contributing his knowledge and experience through NCI. Contact him at ncilink.com/ContactMe.





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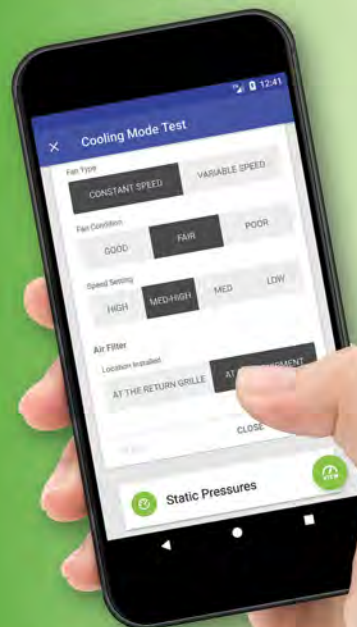
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How Important is Training?

The Distributor's Role

As we interact with our HVAC contractor customers, we hear a common request: “What training can you provide?” This request is true throughout all our markets, coast to coast.

Professional contractors know that a well-trained service and installation team will result in fewer callbacks, lower warranty rates, and a satisfied consumer. These contractors invest their time in quality training, whether it comes through the factory, rep agency, contractor best-practice group, or their distributor. Contractors have told me throughout my career, “We work from **word-of-mouth referrals**.” Therefore, the consumer experience is vital to their success.

The pursuit of providing a great consumer experience leads many contractors to invest more in training their entire staff. Many contractors eliminate unnecessary stock rooms in favor of building training rooms and live-fire equipment labs.

Some invest in their own full-time training staff to provide customer service, sales, and technical

support. Furthermore, many contractors join a best practice group to expand their reach for top-notch training.

TRAINING MUST KEEP UP WITH MARKET CHANGES

This increased interest in training will continue for many years as our industry evolves. For example, there is the energy efficiency evolution. We currently have 13 and 14 SEER 410A equipment and SEER2 410A equipment in the market, and soon, we will have **SEER2 A2L** equipment as well. Understanding the differences and benefits of these offerings will be a challenge for all contractors to explain to their consumers.

The elephant in every job is the ductwork; is it sufficient for the equipment to operate as designed and deliver the comfort and efficiency as promised? Top contractors are invested in testing and measuring **airflow performance** in the ductwork.

The old adage, what gets measured gets done, applies to the duct system in every home. If you aren't testing and measuring airflow, you risk the operation and lifespan of new equipment and consumer comfort. These contractors understand that the equipment is destined to underperform if they don't adequately size ductwork.

Airflow testing has become a standard for top contractors as they realize the direct correlation between good ductwork and a satisfied and comfortable customer.

TECHNICAL TEAM RECRUITMENT REQUIRES TRAINING

As we move into three vastly different models of unitary equipment (SEER, SEER2, & SEER2 A2L) in the market and a necessary influx of youth



NCI's John Puryear leads an HVAC System Performance training session at R.E. Michel recently.

into the trades (due to the '[Great Retirement](#)'), training will continue to be of utmost importance for our industry. Plus, we will see another refrigerant change at the tail end of this decade as we move forward from 'mildly flammable' A2L into '[flammable](#)' A3 refrigerants.

Safety will drive our training and tools as we move into the world of mildly flammable and flammable refrigerants. Here at R.E. Michel Company, training requirements and training availability will continue to evolve into an on-demand platform out of necessity to meet our contractors' needs.

WHY IS TRAINING A BIG INVESTMENT FOR US?

The [R.E. Michel Company](#) takes training personally. We know that without proper product and/or installation training, our contractors may be unable to meet their customers' expectations. R.E. Michel has employed nearly 20 TSAs (Technical Service Advisors) to support our contractors nationwide for years. These TSAs are factory-trained on our key product lines to support our loyal contractor and employee base.

We view this investment in training as an integral part of our customer service. Is there a cost associated with this? Sure, but what is the cost for our contractors to wait on hold with the factory or months to receive factory training? Our TSA group not only hosts training in our facilities but also in our contractors' facilities year-round. Our TSAs' training helps save our contractors thousands of dollars in callbacks.

Many manufacturers simply don't have the bandwidth to adequately staff



a technical department for the peaks of our business. When we experience a heat wave or cold spell, every contractor in the country calls the factory for support.

Contractors are stressed, working long hours, and the last thing they want to do is wait for 10, 20, or 30 minutes (sometimes more) for technical support. This is why training has an infinite value. It is also why we train during the off-seasons and then have our TSAs on call for the weather-related spikes in business.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR DISTRIBUTORS?

Technical training is necessary to deliver the service and experience

to our customers and employees. A knowledgeable branch sales staff is vital to providing the highest levels of customer service that R.E. Michel prides itself on.

In the 'Moment of truth,' we want our team prepared to meet customer needs. By providing quality training for contractors to run an extra service call for profit rather than a call back for free.

When it comes to training our customers, R.E. Michel understands the importance of meeting them where their training needs are. For some customers, that training is in person at one of our live-fire facilities. Others may prefer we host a multiple-day NCI (National Comfort Institute) training course at one of our facilities. And other contractors might be more interested in having a vendor representative or one of our TSAs at their office.

Furthermore, some contractors prefer the flexibility of virtual recorded content, and some prefer to go straight to the factory for training. Having multiple avenues for training our customers is very important. As we grow, we invest more in training rooms in most of our remodels and new branch locations. It's part of our business that we are committed to moving forward.



During distributor-held training, NCI's John Puryear talks about some of the tools for recording airflow test measurements.



LEARNING ABOUT THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND TOOLS

Aside from the aforementioned cost savings, training also educates contractors on the latest and greatest controls and tools! Contractors largely accept the benefits of value-added control packages and tools to display their work to customers. I think of digital combustion analyzers as an example.

We sold these analyzers 20 years ago, but today, we sell more in the off-season than in-season years ago. More contractors today embrace arming their technicians and installers with the tools necessary to save time. Ultimately, they leave the job with a satisfied consumer who will share their positive experience with others.

As our industry continues to evolve, so will the training requirements of our contractors. We are facing challenges with SEER2, A2L, duct sizing, electrification, cold-climate heat pumps, water source heat pumps, and

having all the tools necessary to address them.

These are just a few topics that our industry will be training on for years. We will continue to support HVAC industry organizations, including NCI, to bring the necessary training to our contractors in the best format for their business. **NCI**



Chad McAllister is the sales director for **R.E. Michel Company**, a Glen Burnie, MD-based national distributor of HVAC products and services. He has been with the company for 23 years. During that time, Chad served in many field positions and has gained insight into the needs of his contractor customers. If you have questions, contact him at ncilink.com/ContactMe.

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Demonstrate Your High-Performance Services at Home Shows

One of our favorite events that we look forward to every year is participating in our local home shows. From the beginning, we wanted our company to be a part of the community. At first, we sponsored art events and youth sports teams. In those days, we didn't have an actual budget for marketing. These sponsorships were a great way to promote our company at a reasonable cost, and we have displayed sponsored team photos in our showroom from 1984.

Another inexpensive way to be part of the community is to participate in home shows. Also, from the start, we decided **NOT** to focus on making sales at the shows. Instead, we wanted to be more educational with respect to the products and services we offer.

WORKING DISPLAYS TO DEMONSTRATE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Initially, we were like every other HVACR

contractor with static displays of furnaces and air conditioners. Now that we are a High-Performance HVAC Contractor™, we display an operating HVAC system with test ports and faults.

Ribbons tied to the 'ductwork' act as streamers to demonstrate airflow. The movement of the ribbons helps capture the attention of those who pass by our booth. This often leads to discussions with attendees about what being a high-performance contractor means. We explain how Canco doesn't install boxes — we offer solutions that ensure our customers get "the safest, healthiest, most comfortable, and energy-efficient system possible" (Thanks, David Holt).

We also invite attendees to see what a simple "test" on the equipment can tell about how well a system operates. We demonstrate how results are similar to having their blood pressure taken by their doctor (Thanks, Rob Falke).

With these live setups in our booth, our team can demonstrate problems caused by blockages in the return air and how we can improve airflow by installing a proper air cleaner/filter.

Team members working in the booth encourage people to perform the 'test' themselves using a manometer (not an electronic one) to see the effect of changing the display's dampers.

At Canco, we want our staff to all help work the booth. That includes our technicians. Existing customers relate to them; many recognize the tech who visited their homes.

Canco ClimateCare uses home shows to connect to their community and their customers.





Potential customers are less intimidated by asking techs questions as opposed to talking with a “salesperson.”

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

In addition to working HVAC equipment, we include a computer monitor that exhibits before-and-after pictures of jobs our company performed. The team in our booth can make appointments then and there for sales, maintenance, or service.

We always place an ad in the Home-Show brochure inviting attendees to bring their HVACR questions to our booth. This ad differs from other contractors who advertise their home show special or have a picture of a piece of equipment.

We always ensure that we offer some give-away for passersby who may not have noticed our booth. By providing them with a Canco grocery bag, a Canco pen, etc., they generally slow down and look at our display.

In the past, we used to hold a drawing; however, we stopped because people were wary of being hassled when they filled out a slip that asked for a phone number or email address.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Home shows are also a great way to connect or reconnect with customers. It is rewarding to hear what excellent service our techs provide. We love hearing customers say things like, “I use Canco and would never think about going elsewhere.”

In addition, for those of us who spend most of our time in the office, working the booth during a home show helps us by meeting customers and being able to put a face to a voice.

All in all, I can’t imagine NOT participating in a home show. In fact, I just registered this week for a show in April 2024. Again, the cost for participation is reasonable, the time commitment is minimal (usually a Satur-

day and Sunday), and — despite NOT entering the show with an expectation of making sales — we always do.

Participating in local home shows is a great opportunity to connect with the community, current customers, and potential new ones. It’s also an opportunity to differentiate our company from competitors. Our focus remains on providing legitimate information on what we do. **NCI**

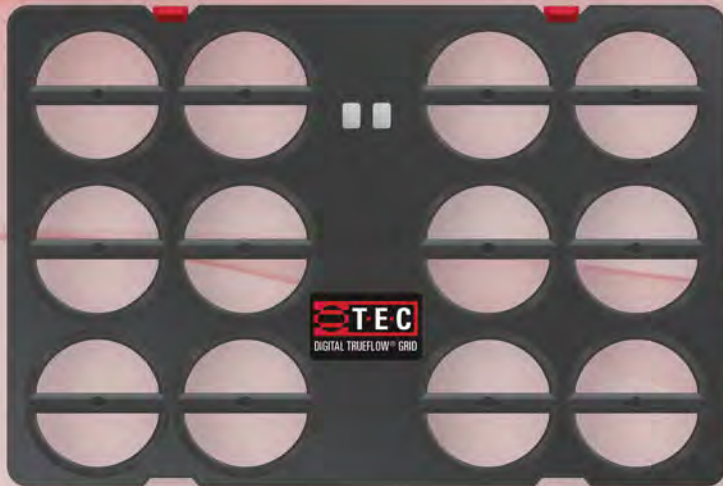


Nancy McKeraghan is an owner/operator, along with her husband, Bob, of **Canco ClimateCare**, an HVAC contracting company established in 1984 in Newmarket, Ontario, Canada. In 2023, she was inducted into

this magazine’s **High-Performance HVAC Contractor Influencer** hall of fame. The HVAC industry has recognized her for her leadership and innovation. She was the first and only female to be Chair of the National Contractors’ Division of HRAI and Chair of the total organization in 2007. She can be reached at ncilink.com/ContactMe.



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NCI's Latest Team Additions and Promotions

National Comfort Institute (NCI) continues to grow and change. We are excited to announce the addition of new members to our team, as well as several team promotions. Our new additions join a group of individuals who have consistently demonstrated their dedication, expertise, and commitment to NCI's success.

Their hard work and contributions have not gone unnoticed, and we are proud to recognize their achievements.

Please join us in congratulating them:

● **Mark Hunt** – Mark joined NCI in 2021.

He has an extensive background in the PHVAC industry, eventually specializing in hydronic heating systems, including radiant, steam, and hot water. NCI recently promoted Mark to a full-time technical instructor.



● **Rob Minnick** joined NCI in 2023 as

part of the trainer/instructor team. He has 43 years of experience in the Heating and Air Conditioning field, in particular, with Mechanical Design & Building Performance for owners. He holds a number of national certifications and is active in many HVAC Industry associations.



● **David Richardson**

first joined NCI in 2010 as a curriculum developer and trainer. He took on a much broader role after the passing of Rob Falke. He was recently promoted to vice president of training to oversee the



development of the curriculum and the trainers themselves.

● **Eric Palmer** joined NCI in July 2023 to fill the technical curriculum manager role. His background includes Quality Management Systems (QMS), training programs, curriculum development, qualification and certification, field testing, metrology, and auditing.



● **Nancy Zander** joined NCI in mid-2023 as administrative assistant in the new Morristown offices. She performs several administrative functions, including reception, class prep, processing, shipping and receiving, and inventory management.

Have questions? Call your Customer Care Representative at **800-633-7058**.

Summit 2024 Hotel Registration is Open

Ladies and Gentlemen — The High-Performance HVAC Summit 2024 hotel reservation site is live and ready for you. Summit will be headquartered in the [Crowne Plaza Asheville](#) in Asheville, NC, from **September 10-13, 2024**. There are four ways you can reserve a room:

1. Attendees can take advantage of specially negotiated room rates of \$174 by calling the hotel and using the NCI Room Block code of **NCI** to get the low rate.
2. You can also use the following link, which will automatically add the NCI block code for you: [NCI Summit 2024](#). **This link is NOT Mobile Compatible!**
3. If you'd like to reserve rooms the

old-fashioned way, call the Asheville Crowne Plaza toll-free number **844-330-0296** (open 24/7) and mention the group name of **NCI Summit 2024** to receive the special group rate.

4. Finally, for In-House reservations, attendees can call the local number during regular business hours — **828-285-2603** — and mention the group name, **NCI Summit 2024**.

Don't Forget to Register For the Summit!

Don't worry if you haven't already locked in your spot. You can still do so here: 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, general sessions, and more.


But you must register for 2024 by December 31, 2023, to have this access.

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

Survey Drawing Winner


The winner of the 2023 Readership Survey prize drawing is David Coziahr of [Cozi-ahr Heating](#), Council Bluffs, IA.




David's name was drawn from the contractor respondents to this study and won a FREE registration to the 2024 NCI High-Performance Summit in Asheville, NC. 

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Distributors: Add Incredible Value for Your HVAC Contractor Customers



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

As Mike Weil mentioned in his [editorial](#), our industry is experiencing a higher rate of change than ever before.

Not only is technology changing at breakneck speed, so is our labor pool. Technicians are leaving our industry in droves with baby boomers retiring at almost twice the rate as younger people coming in.

Then there's the age-old problem of poaching, where some play the zero sum game of stealing employees from each other, offering signing bonuses and other perks. This game of musical chairs discourages loyalty for both employers and employees.

In the midst of all this chaos, we have to somehow continuously train these good people — and most are good — to keep themselves and your customers safe, and provide a higher level of precision and accuracy than ever before.

When you look at it from that angle it's a pretty tall order. Add to that most contractors feel they cannot afford the lost opportunity cost of taking their people out of the field for training; which is by far the highest cost.

HOW DISTRIBUTORS CAN HELP

Contractors could really use help from distributors to get the training they need in a manner that won't break the bank. Just as important, the training has to actually make a difference.

This is true from a technical standpoint, especially with new technology like inverter systems that require high quality design, installation, and testing. It's also critical when it comes to monetizing what a well-trained contracting organization has to offer — especially a high-performance contractor.

The silver lining is distributors who support and encourage this level of training benefit from

higher ticket sales, fewer callbacks and warranty issues, and a stellar reputation for their brands.

Training done right can be a win-win for everyone in the channel including manufacturers, distributors, contractors, field people, and most importantly — end customers.

At a [HARDI](#) (Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International) Conference a number of years ago the theme was, "*How can a distributor be more than a commodity?*"


The most common question that echoed over and over was, "How can I add value to differentiate my organization?" Simple: **Offer the best training programs in your market!**

So, I lay down the challenge to all distributors out there to take a hard look at yourselves in the mirror. Are you a training-oriented organization that regularly supports and encourages customers to attend good training at your location?

I'm not just talking about "product demo and a slice of pizza," training, but one or more day-long classes, that preferably include certification exams. This type of training is what will move the needle for your customers — and your company.

The right training not only makes contractors better installers and servicers of the equipment you sell them, it also helps them sell higher efficiency equipment as well as air distribution renovations to ensure the equipment can efficiently deliver the comfort it was designed to provide.

With the right training partners, it's not that difficult or costly to offer a solid training program, preferably at your location, where you can invite both existing and potential customers to come see what you are doing to support them.

Don't put it off. Now is the perfect time to build your training program for 2024. Need some help? Give NCI a call. We'd be glad to share what's working for many great distributors out there! 



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We can customize your Onsite by combining both classroom and hands-on field training. NCI instructors can even ride along with your team to a customer's home. Each Onsite is unique. You'll work with Nick Guarino, NCI's Director of Operations and Sales to create a program that will meet your goals. There is no cost for a consultation, and no obligation.

Are you an NCI Member? If so, you can use NCI Bucks towards the cost of a class and/or earn NCI Bucks towards future training!



Contact Nick Guarino today to get the process started and lock in your dates!

PHONE: 800 633-7058 • EMAIL: NickG@ncihvac.com • NCILink.com/onsites for more information!



SAVE THE DATE!
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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

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