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### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

- 2025 Residential Market Outlook: The Song Remains the Same
- Why Contractors Choose to Test, Diagnose, and Upgrade Systems
- The Power of Culture and Accountability

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# The Top 10 Challenges and Opportunities HVAC Contractors Face in 2025



**Mike Weil** is editor-in-chief and director of communications and publications at National Comfort Institute, Inc. Contact him at [ncilink.com/ContactMe](mailto:ncilink.com/ContactMe).

In my years writing about the HVAC industry, I've seen many challenges faced by HVAC companies. Some are perennial — others emerge due to technological and regulatory shifts. Here are some of the top challenges I see and the opportunities they provide.

**Increasing Efficiency Standards:** Energy efficiency is more than just a buzzword; it's a mandate. Every year regulations tighten, and HVAC companies must keep up. That means contractors must continually invest in high-efficiency equipment and adopt sustainable practices.

If you test and measure system performance, you can truly meet many of these requirements and help save customers' energy dollars while contributing to your bottom line.

**Regulatory Compliance:** Navigating the regulations governing our industry is no small feat. From building codes to safety standards and environmental regulations, staying well-informed and proactive about regulatory changes can prevent legal issues and protect your reputation.

**Tech Advancements:** The pace of technological advancement in HVAC is exhilarating and daunting at the same time. Staying current with the latest innovations requires continuous training and investment in new tools and equipment. Contractors who embrace training can offer superior service and maintain a competitive edge.

**Technician Shortages** will remain one of the most pressing issues in 2025. The demand for HVAC services is growing, yet finding and retaining qualified professionals is increasingly difficult. Again, investing in robust training programs and creating a supportive work environment are crucial for attracting and retaining talent.

**Seasonal Demand Fluctuations:** The solution to leveling the ups and downs of each season is selling maintenance agreements. High-

Performance HVAC contractors include testing and measuring to generate equipment replacement and duct renovation work year-round.

**Supply Chain Disruptions** were extreme during the COVID-19 pandemic, though it is getting better. Still, 2025 may continue seeing some shortages. Proactively managing supply chain risks by diversifying suppliers and maintaining buffer stock is essential.

**Rising Costs of Materials and Labor** have a direct impact on your bottom line. To combat this, it's important to implement cost-saving measures, negotiate favorable contracts, and continually seek ways to optimize operational efficiency.

**Customer Expectations:** Today's customers are more informed and demand prompt service, transparent pricing, and exceptional quality. Meeting their expectations is vital to building loyalty and fostering long-term relationships. Having clear communication and consistent delivery of high-quality services also helps.

**Competition:** Standing out requires more than just good service; it demands innovation and effective marketing to maintain a competitive edge. It's also essential to continuously invest in marketing strategies that highlight your company's strengths and attract new customers.

**Emerging Trends:** Finally, keeping pace with trends like smart HVAC systems and sustainable practices presents both opportunities and challenges. Embracing trends can set you apart, but also requires you to adapt your business models to align with changing customer preferences.

While the HVAC industry faces significant challenges, each one also presents an opportunity for growth and improvement.

By staying adaptable, investing in your workforce, and embracing innovation, you can thrive in an ever-evolving marketplace. 

Written by HVAC Professionals for HVAC Professionals

**TEC's Roomulator™**

Have you ever had a customer complain that their bedrooms are too hot, too cold, or too stuffy? Do you know that this situation is often the result of negative or positive pressures in each room?

In my experience, many contractors shoot from the hip to solve these complaints. Sometimes they add another supply or return, but often don't properly size the duct and grille. Or they simply cut the door off at the bottom.

The HVAC Industry needed a way to determine the size for a "transfer" duct or grille to relieve passive air pressures in uncomfortable rooms.

This has always been a challenge until [The Energy Conservatory](#) (TEC) developed a tool they call the [Roomulator](#).

The Roomulator was developed by TEC in collaboration with **National Comfort Institute** (NCI).

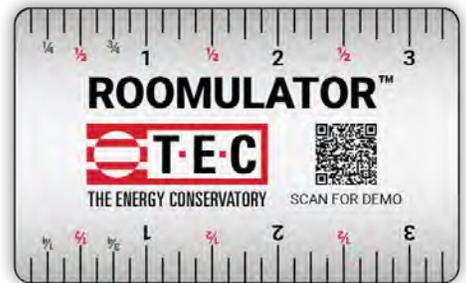
This "tool" is the size of a business card and can be used to determine the amount of airflow (CFM) needed to relieve the "positive" pressure of an individual room.

Your technicians can learn how to use this tool by scanning the QR code on the front of the card that takes them to a video: the [Roomulator Tutorial](#).

They will also need a micromanometer with a 3/16th hose that runs four to six-feet in length. The micromanometer must provide measurement readouts in Pascals.

Here are some micromanometers to consider:

- The Energy Conservatory [DG8 Micromanometer](#)



- [Fieldpiece SDMN5 Dual Port Manometer](#) or [JL3KM2 Wireless Manometer Probe Kit](#)
- [Testo 510 Differential Pressure Manometer](#) or the [Wireless 510i Differential Pressure Manometer](#).

I use the Roomulator fairly often and highly recommend it.

To learn more go to [ncilink.com/roomulator](#).

— by John Puryear, Instructor, National Comfort Institute

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# Leading HVAC Excellence through Innovation and Resilience

In the dynamic world of HVAC, Ben DiMarco stands out as a seasoned leader who has steered his company, [DiMarco & Associates, LLC](#) of Cleveland, OH, towards remarkable growth and innovation. He does this despite the typical and atypical obstacles that impact every small business in America today.

With more than two decades in the HVAC industry, Ben now focuses on guiding the company through the stormy winds of the 21st Century. His drive is really a testament to resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.

You can see this when you compare where DiMarco & Associates were four years ago when [High-Performance HVAC Today](#) magazine first spotlighted them.

Back then, 70% of its \$5 million in revenue came from the commercial sector, 30% from residential.

## A GROWING TEAM WITH DIVERSE EXPERTISE

Today, this \$8.2 million residential and commercial HVAC company has seen significant expansion under Ben's leadership. They employ around 47 people, a mix of full-time and part-time employees across the residential and commercial sectors.

"We have about 12 or 13 people in the office, including sales, project managers, and administrative staff, and

around 35 in the field," Ben explains.

This diverse team structure allows the company to tackle various projects, from residential maintenance to large-scale commercial installations.

## INNOVATIVE SERVICE EXPANSION

One of the standout achievements of DiMarco & Associates in recent years is its strategic service expansion.

"We've ramped up our controls and automation capabilities and are now diving into electrical and generator services," Ben shares. The company is also acquiring a small electrical contractor, which will further bolster its service offerings.

Adding these new services reflects Ben's proactive approach to business growth, driven by market demands and an eye for future opportunities.

"We've always provided power generator installation and service, but now we're doing more in-house rather than subcontracting," he notes, highlighting a shift towards greater control and expertise within the company.

## NAVIGATING CHALLENGES WITH DETERMINATION

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges, but Ben and

his team navigated them resiliently.

"We were a bit stagnated because of the pandemic, but by 2022, we started to ramp back up," Ben recounts.

Despite a slight downturn last year due to transitional changes, the company achieved significant growth, reaching gross sales of approximately \$8.2 million, up from around \$3.5 million in 2019.

HVAC supply chain issues have been a persistent challenge. Ben acknowledges the difficulties but says he remains optimistic.

"Day-to-day stuff isn't quite as bad, but there are still issues, especially with custom units and commercial equipment," he says.

DiMarco adds that they have also encountered quality control issues from manufacturers, further complicating their operations.

"For every 50 units delivered to us, we have problems with at least one," he laments, emphasizing the importance of vigilance and thorough inspections.

## COMMITMENT TO QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Their commitment to quality and customer satisfaction is central to DiMarco & Associates' success. Ben emphasizes the importance of system renovations and [Air Upgrades](#), especially in the residential sector. "It's still a heavy focal point for us," he says.

Whether addressing comfort issues or optimizing system performance,



Ben DiMarco



DiMarco & Associates prioritizes long-term solutions over quick fixes.

Ben is candid about the challenges of communicating technical information to customers. “Our technicians are technically savvy, but they’re not always sales-type guys,” he admits.

To bridge this gap, the company provides ongoing training and education.

“We want our technicians to be able to discuss technical problems and explain why upgrading makes sense,” Ben adds. “We also want them focused on the latest product trends so they can provide customers the best options.”

The company’s overall performance and growth reflect this dedication to staying ahead of industry trends and technologies.

## TRAINING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Speaking of training, DiMarco is really keyed in on the training they provide for the team. Training is a cornerstone of DiMarco’s and the company’s operational philosophy.

“Every day, something is going on, training-wise,” Ben asserts. “From senior technicians mentoring junior

staff to formal training sessions, we work hard to ensure our team is always learning and improving.”

DiMarco himself is deeply committed to continuous education. “I probably spend 300 to 400 hours per year on my own research,” he reveals.

“And we are even looking to begin bringing outside instructors to our company to keep the team on the cutting edge in all the disciplines we provide customers.

“The fact is, I was convinced practically from the first time I spoke to Rob Falke and Dominick Guarino at National Comfort Institute (NCI) that the High-Performance HVAC™ approach is absolutely the right thing to do,” DiMarco says.

“That is not just on the technical side of things but also on the business and management sides. We firmly believe in the NCI motto, *“If you don’t measure, you are just guessing™.”*”

## LEVERAGE ADVANCED TESTING & MEASUREMENT TOOLS

To ensure optimal system performance, DiMarco employs advanced testing and measurement tools.

Service Manager Henry Sterling, a key figure in the company’s technical operations, has been instrumental in integrating these tools.

Ben says Henry is heavily involved with research and how the company implements tools like [measureQuick®](#). This focus on advanced diagnostics improves system performance and enhances customer trust and satisfaction.

DiMarco & Associates use indoor air quality (IAQ) instruments on service calls. They like tools that help explain what is going on to customers.

“We’ve had a lot of good luck with state-of-the-art instruments like the [Air Advice Model 5200 IAQ Monitor](#), which provides clear, visual charts for customers,” Ben shares. “These tools help translate complex technical data into easily understandable information for clients, fostering better communication and decision-making.”

## LOOKING AHEAD: OPPORTUNITIES & INNOVATIONS

As DiMarco & Associates look towards the future, Ben remains focused on challenges and opportunities. He



says the [transition to new refrigerants](#), such as R32 and R454B, is a significant shift for the industry.

“We’ve installed several R32 units and are bidding on projects that use R454B,” Ben says.

Despite initial challenges with new regulations and misinformation, Ben says he is confident in the company’s ability to adapt and thrive.

“Our strategic growth plans also include expanding our testing, balancing, commissioning, and controls group. This specialized group will be a key part of our operations,” Ben envisions, emphasizing the importance of expertise in these areas for long-term success.

### A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH NCI

Ben will tell you that his affiliation with NCI is vital to his company’s professionalism and reputation in the marketplace.

“Everything that NCI teaches and preaches, we believe in,” he affirms. “The methodologies and principles

advocated by NCI, particularly the focus on measurement and verification, resonate deeply with our approach to HVAC excellence.”

Ben adds that the training and resources provided by NCI have also been instrumental in shaping the company’s operational standards.

“Rob Falke was a mentor to me, and NCI’s practical, sensible methodologies are the lifeblood of everything we do,” he says.

### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As DiMarco & Associates move into 2025 and beyond, Ben’s vision is clear: continuous improvement, strategic growth, and an unwavering commitment to quality.

“I’m excited about all the stuff we’ve been working on. Our recent hiring of experienced technicians and installers has bolstered our capabilities, and I believe that is the foundation for future growth.”

In a rapidly evolving industry, Ben DiMarco’s leadership and vision stand as a beacon of excellence. His dedication

to innovation, quality, and customer satisfaction has propelled the company to new heights over the past four years and set a standard for other contractors to follow.

As Ben and his team continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, one thing remains certain: DiMarco & Associates are poised for a bright and prosperous future.

For these and many other reasons, **High-Performance HVAC Today** selects **DiMarco & Associates** as its *January 2025 Contractor Spotlight*. Congratulations to Ben DiMarco and his entire team. 



**Mike Weil** is the editor-in-chief of **High-Performance HVAC Today** magazine as well as the director of communications for National Comfort Institute. He has covered the HVAC Industry in the trade press for 40+ years. He is focused on a contractor-first approach to editorial, specifically targeted to the High-Performance HVAC Contracting community. Weil can be reached at [ncilink.com/Contactme](mailto:ncilink.com/Contactme).



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# Why Contractors Choose to

## *Test, Diagnose, and Upgrade Systems*

ANY ARTICLE FROM A GOOD WRITER IS WORTH READING AGAIN AND AGAIN. THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE FOR THOSE WRITTEN BY THE LATE, GREAT **ROB FALKE**. ROB WAS THE PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL COMFORT INSTITUTE (NCI) AND ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS THE **HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC™ CONTRACTING MOVEMENT**. WITH THAT IN MIND, WE'D LIKE TO REVISIT AN ARTICLE HE PUBLISHED IN THIS MAGAZINE IN SEPTEMBER 2019. IT IS JUST AS PERTINENT TODAY AS IT WAS THEN. SO WITHOUT FURTHER ADO:

**W**hy an NCI (National Comfort Institute)-trained technician chooses to pull out a manometer to peer into a system's performance is something I think about every day. This extra effort works like a key that unlocks unseen opportunities to solve problems, delight customers, and earn handsome

financial rewards.

Let's take a look at four reasons why you may choose to grow a healthy company culture that tests and diagnoses your customer's HVAC system performance. We'll also look at the value a system upgrade brings to your customers and the beef it adds to your bottom line.



### **DELIVER VALUABLE SOLUTIONS OTHERS CAN'T**

Air conditioning systems have been around more than 100 years. Fortunately for us, only a handful of people are aware of how poorly installed air conditioning and heating systems perform. The opportunity to harvest this work is ever increasing as equipment efficiency continues to improve, while installed system efficiency continues to decline.

# WHY?

Fortunately, the family of NCI professionals is among the few who are qualified and able to discover and improve installed system efficiency. The fact is, this service is needed everywhere and invisible to your competitors. These solutions earn far higher margins than service or installation rates if you develop the confidence to offer them for what they're worth to your customers.

Henry Ford had a boiler problem and factory production screeched to a halt. He called Nikola Tesla for help. Tesla arrived, diagnosed the problem and placed an X on the boiler. He smacked it with a hammer and the factory geared back up. Tesla sent Ford an invoice for \$10,000. Ford, surprised at the cost for the short service visit, asked him to detail the invoice. Tesla wrote, "Use of the hammer, \$1. Knowing where to strike with the hammer, \$9,999."

When you build a company culture that tests, diagnoses, and upgrades HVAC system performance, your company moves from offering labor to delivering professional services. You are paid for your superior knowledge and skill, which earns far more than hammer smacking.

[Check out this additional article](#) for the basics of adding High-Performance HVAC™ Contracting to your business.

## HVAC SYSTEMS DON'T HAVE SPEEDOMETERS

Say you buy a new car, which you're confident can drive down the highway at 70 miles per hour all day. You take it on the road and find everyone's passing you while your pedal is to the metal. You read the speedometer and see the car will only go 35 mph. Of course, you'd head straight back to the dealer-



ship and get your money back.

An air conditioning system has no speedometer, and you can't see other systems passing you on the road. Its performance is invisible and unknown, except for a few bothersome annoyances your customers have complained about for years without receiving a solution.

When a technician uses a combustion analyzer or another test instrument, it acts as a speedometer making system performance problems visible to the technician. At that moment, your company enters a market without competition, having earned the right to be paid what you're worth.

The value solutions can bring in two

to four times the hourly labor rates you typically earn. The work is thoughtful and challenging, which means you will begin to employ sharp minds, not just strong arms and backs.

And yes, someday, you'll use your mad skills to actually install speedometers on the systems you build, upgrade, and service.

Your customer's system performance will appear on your dispatcher's dashboard to identify breakdowns and predict performance improving repairs around the clock.

## WHY RECRUIT, ELEVATE, AND RETAIN TECHNICIANS

Recent discussions with owners of High-Performance HVAC™ companies revealed the key to their success is training and enlisting technicians to test, diagnose, and upgrade poorly performing HVAC systems.

With the support and leadership of company management, technicians are the front line. Remember, this work begins when the certified technician



pulls out his or her test instruments to peer into a system's performance.

Successful High-Performance HVAC contractors agree the company must be fully committed to training technicians and others in the company. This creates knowledgeable team members and an elevated culture where testing, diagnostics, and system upgrades thrive. Technicians can't help but test when immersed in such a culture.

Engaged technicians quickly understand the mission of performance. They have danced around it every day of their careers but had no speedometer or a target. They have been unable to properly measure or improve installed system performance.

High-performance contractors report trained technicians are more engaged in their jobs and that creates stronger company loyalty. As confi-

dence grows, their ability to explain and sell more services to their customers skyrockets. Your customers love being educated by a technician.

As recruiting new techs is becoming critical in our industry today, training and having a high-performance mission becomes a magnet for new talent. This is true inside and outside the industry.

Trained techs love to contribute to a cause and many feel they belong more and are motivated to improve themselves and others.

Techs take great pride in knowing they are among the best in the country. Being certified in the tenets of HVAC system performance is often considered the highest professional credential they have earned.

The very nature of their jobs change when they find hidden problems,

upgrade performance, and then verify they delivered what was promised to their customers.

## DELIVERING A UNIQUE PRODUCT

Imagine a product that your company creates from scratch and is needed and wanted by nearly every customer you have. This product is system-improving performance upgrades.

You specify it, design it, build it, and then verify it delivers the promised results. You keep nearly 80% of every dollar earned by this product and the cash remains in your company. Often, less than 10% of the job cost is paid out to a manufacturer.

You set the system upgrade value without competition because every system-performance upgrade is a custom project. This product often increases system performance by more than 35%. What's that worth and what other product can top those results?

Beef to the bottom line is earned by adding \$2000 to \$4000 system upgrades, with a 50% to 70% gross profit to most of your equipment change-outs. There are zero advertising costs and the expense of job mobilization is already covered in the equipment installation cost.

Here's one more article to read on [\*\*Why System Performance Measurement Works.\*\*](#)

Before your company can sell and earn the high net profit that system upgrades deliver, first you must possess the ability to deliver the goods to your customers. Which is why each year NCI improves its ability to support and help you build the culture of testing, diagnostics, and upgrading system performance into your company or career. 

## Remembering Rob "Doc" Falke



Rob Falke co-founded **National Comfort Institute (NCI)** in the early 1990's and led the technical training and curriculum development teams of the company. His vision was that the performance of an HVAC system can be effectively measured and diagnosed under live operating conditions in the field.

Falke was known as the father of modern residential and light commercial air balancing. He diligently worked to help contractors understand the concepts of HVAC system performance. Just as importantly, he taught contractors how to teach customers about it, and helped them understand the value of having someone trained in NCI's disciplines service or replace their system.

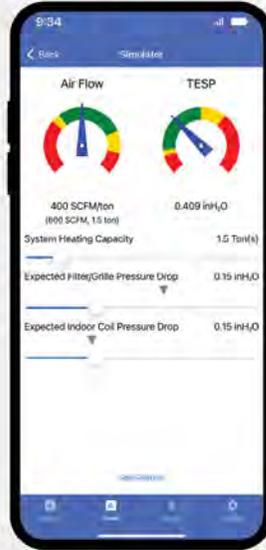
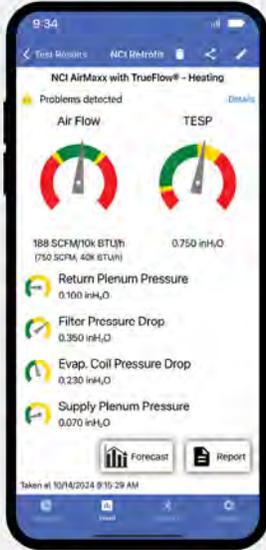
Education was at the core of everything for Rob, yet interestingly he had no formal training in education. Instead, he intensely focused on how to teach so that just about anyone could understand complex concepts.

He had a natural curiosity and a will to unravel just about any technical challenge he came across. This led to him helping to develop national industry standards like [\*\*ANSI/ASHRAE 221\*\*](#), titled a "*Test Method To Field-Measure And Score The Cooling And Heating Performance Of An Installed Unitary HVAC System.*"



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# 2025 Residential Market Outlook: *The Song Remains the Same*

In my 40+ years of writing about this industry, several topics have always been at the top of the past and future trends list: workforce issues, technology, and the environment. As one of my favorite bands used to sing, “*The Song Remains the Same*.”

Led Zeppelin’s 1973 hit was an ode to the power of music. The major trends in the HVAC Industry seem to be odes to the power of creative solution-finding. The good news is that it bodes well for the HVAC contracting industry in general and the High-Performance HVAC™ segment of the industry in particular.

Zeppelin Lyricist Robert Plant wrote, “*Everything that’s small has to grow, and it’s gonna grow ...*” and when it comes to the top three trends, that is also true.

## SOME ECONOMIC BASICS

The election is over, and Americans across the country have spoken. Some changes will come in 2025 that will help Americans in general and small businesses in particular.

Inflation has been a significant problem, and though it seems to be easing (especially with the Federal Reserve reducing the prime rate by a decent percentage), consumers still feel the pinch on their wallets.

That may impact their ability to invest in new replacement equipment and duct renovations, but it also may lead to more investment in repairs, air upgrades, and so on.

Having said that, **Grand View Research**, in their [2024-2030 Market Analysis Report](#), says that the U.S. HVAC systems market size was

estimated at \$30.41 billion in 2023 and projected it to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.4% from 2024 to 2030.

The report also states, “*Global warming and the resultant extreme climatic conditions will help uptick the market demand over the forecast period. In addition, the demand for energy-efficient equipment, together with the growing real estate market, will also upkeep HVAC demand in the U.S.*”

“*Moreover, the increasing demand for energy-efficient equipment, coupled with the growing real estate market, is expected to increase the demand for U.S. HVAC systems.*”

**Eric Post of ITR Economics wrote in October** that his organization sees the service component of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) will remain near 2024 lev-

els, with slight increases above 2%. He says three factors will fuel the slight growth:

- Rising real personal incomes amid a generally tight labor market
- A boost from a recovering inflation-adjusted money supply
- Spending from higher-income households fared relatively better in this business cycle amid elevated home prices, stock valuations, and corporate profitability.



Infographic courtesy of the [Workyard website](#).



Post cites this statement from a recent **Federal Reserve Study** “that found that high-income households (defined as \$100k+) saw inflation-adjusted retail spending increase 16.7% from January 2018 to August 2024.

“This increase was 13.3% for middle-income households (\$60k–100k) and only 7.9% for low-income households (\$0k–60k). While this study is specific to retail spending, the effect is probably even more pronounced on the services side of the economy,” Post wrote.

### OTHER STATISTICS

The Grandview Research report also has statistics showing that, on average, two to three million heating and cooling systems undergo replacement in the U.S.

That is an excellent statistic. The opportunities go beyond just the demand for new and replacement units, and there is a notable upswing in maintenance and repair activities.

HVAC contractors who sell and

perform regular equipment cleaning and maintenance (preferably by selling maintenance agreements) help consumers prevent system damage or failure. Maintenance agreements will continue providing a robust revenue stream for contractors in 2025 and beyond. Agreement sales continue leveling seasonal ups and downs for more consistent revenues.

However, supply chain issues stemming from the pandemic shutdowns of a few years ago still caused some problems for contractors and distributors alike in 2024. Several sources report that supply chain issues will continue declining next year, especially on the residential side of things.

Are there still some product shortages? Yes, but many contractors, including Ben DiMarco of Cleveland-based **DiMarco & Associates**, see that it will become less of an issue in 2025 and beyond.

The **Air Conditioning Contractors of America** (ACCA) posted an article on their website that says the

industry is heating up and set to “explode in size over the next 10 years.”

They say that the U.S. HVAC services market will increase in value to nearly \$36 billion by 2030 and will create 13% more HVAC service and installation jobs by 2028.

### TECHNICIAN SHORTAGES

Speaking of jobs, workforce issues remain at the top of most trend lists. Though the ACCA article is positive, the U.S. HVAC industry is currently short 38% of the technicians it needs, with 110,000 unfilled positions out of 290,000 technicians (according to a **trending report** written for an economic research group called **Workyard** by writer **Luis Batongbaka**).

That same report says that our industry loses 23,000 workers annually, which could lead to a shortage of 225,000 technicians in five years.

The good news is that contractors do have ways to create technician opportunities in 2025 and beyond. Think about what you can do to build an

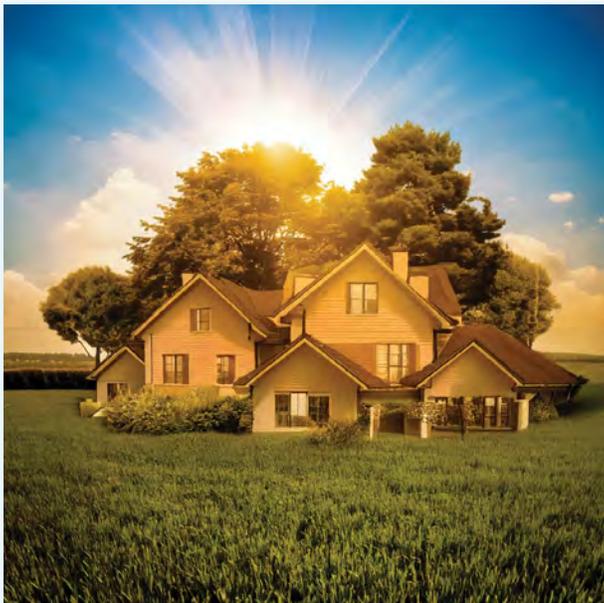
incredible work environment and strengthen your market reputation that can help attract people to your company. Here are some suggestions from Batongbakal:

- **Make career paths a priority** in your company that include work-life balance and personal growth opportunities for technicians
- **Invest in training**, certifications, and advanced tools and instruments for them
- **Retain older workers by adjusting their roles** or creating part-time positions that keep them in the “knowledge-base” behind your techs’ success in the field
- **Create partnerships within your community**. Such partnerships create more visibility for your company and team and demonstrate their value
- **Establish recruiting programs through apprenticeships** with local high schools and trade schools
- **Make sure you have excellent benefits**, including retirement savings plans, more paid time off, and better pay.

Whether you believe in the climate crisis or not, as extreme weather conditions continue to become more common, the need for reliable HVAC system installations, repair, and maintenance will continue to grow. This will increase the demand for HVAC techs.

### TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Regarding evolutionary technology trends in our industry, the song remains the same – only the parts keep changing. What do I mean? In my



opinion, our industry is simply outstanding in its ability to “turn on a dime” to meet technological challenges, regulatory requirements, and consumer demands.

For example, two significant technological trends that began in 2024 and will continue through 2025 and beyond are the nationwide push for **electrification** and **renewable energy integration**.

There’s a notable shift towards electric HVAC systems, particularly heat pumps, due to their superior energy efficiency and environmental benefits. This transition is supported by state and federal government incentives and evolving building codes that favor electric over gas-powered systems.

Integrating HVAC systems with renewable energy sources, like solar panels, is becoming more common and incentivized by many public utilities and the federal government.

New cold-climate heat pumps are part of the move toward electrification and renewable energy integration.

**With the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption**, heat pumps continue growing as an attractive alternative to traditional HVAC systems.

### OTHER INDUSTRY TRENDS TO CONSIDER

It is important to note that several other industry and technological trends will also contribute to a positive year in 2025. These include the following:

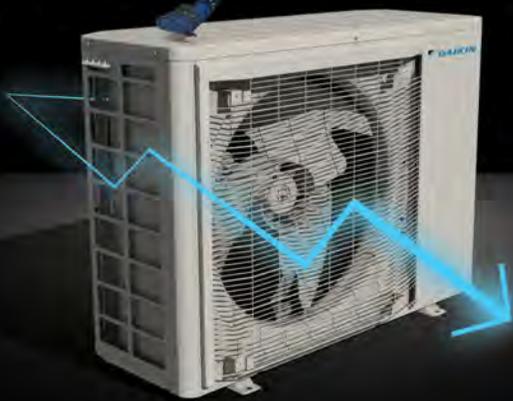
**Indoor Air Quality (IAQ):** Post-pandemic, there’s an increased focus on IAQ, with consumers demanding HVAC systems that improve air quality by filtering pollutants, allergens, and pathogens. Advanced filtration systems, UV light purifiers, and humidity control are becoming standard features in modern HVAC units.

**Smart HVAC Systems and IoT (Internet of Things):** The adoption of smart home technology continues to grow, with more homeowners installing Wi-Fi-enabled thermostats and HVAC systems.

These systems offer enhanced convenience and efficiency, allowing for remote control and automation. HVAC companies increasingly focus on smart technology to meet consumer demand for connectivity and ease of use.

**Geothermal Heat Pumps:** Although this is a small market segment, geothermal heat pumps continue to gain attention as an eco-friendly heating and cooling solution. With the reinstatement of tax credits for geothermal technology, there’s potential for increased adoption in the coming years.





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# The Power of Culture *and Accountability*

**T**he definition of accountability is “the quality or state of being accountable, especially an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions.” Every employee in every business is being held accountable to a standard set by management.

Yes, as HVAC business owners and managers, we all set standards, whether we think we have or not. If we don’t consciously set standards, a standard could set itself. The standards can be how we feel a particular employee is performing. If you ever thought that someone was doing a great job,” then you are using feeling as at least one criterion for employees.

It is not wrong to use “feeling” as a criterion. Intuition is a valuable tool. An example of intuition from the world of sports is the “eye test.” Many talking heads regularly mention players passing the “eye test” as well as meeting other statistical criteria.

Simply put, the eye test is a way to judge an athlete as they compete within their sport based upon your own observations. You can never assume someone is what you hear they are. Instead, you must see it for yourself.

## BEYOND THE EYE TEST

However, the eye test is just one way to judge a player. There are metrics used as well.

Everyone who has been through NCI (National Comfort Institute) training has heard the saying,

*“If you don’t measure, you are just guessing™.”*

Usually, that saying refers to **high-performance** measurements of the HVAC equipment. However, you can apply this idea to any aspect of a business. For example, when we measure the performance of our business, we call it a **Key Performance Indicator (KPI)**.

We might measure the revenue that each truck brings into the business. Or we might measure the number of jobs a technician can convert to a sale.

These are relatively standard business metrics. However, there is an inherent issue with KPIs.

The problem is they only track the result, not the process. In other words, these KPIs prioritize making a sale, not the steps it takes to get there.

What I am describing is an “ends-justify-the-means” mindset. The “ends” being receiving money from a customer. For instance, after selling new equipment, it doesn’t add any revenue to make sure that



the equipment is safe or operating at the correct blower speed.

If technicians are judged only on sales metrics, these extra steps are easy to skip. Ultimately, we want the technicians to be accountable for the process and the outcome.

## BEING ACCOUNTABLE

Vincent’s Heating & Plumbing aims to keep technicians accountable for the measurements,



processes, and results they generate. We believe there are three keys to accomplishing this aim:

- Culture
- Simplicity
- Engagement.

## CULTURE

Culture is the most vital of the keys mentioned above. Think of culture as things that are non-negotiable to us. These are things that have a trickle-down effect and influence the behaviors of everyone in our companies.

For instance, if you believe all blowers are inferior to variable-speed blowers and you only want your team to install furnaces with variable speed blowers, your technicians will likely begin to believe the same.

The culture at Vincent's Plumbing and Heating begins with combustion testing. Before they are allowed to get into their own service truck, every technician and plumber is required to attend and pass NCI combustion training.

Since 2006, we have ensured all our technicians recertify every two years.

We understand that this alone is no guarantee our techs will perform the combustion testing on calls.

However, aspiring technicians who do ride-alongs with most of our more experienced see them do **carbon monoxide (CO) testing**. This activity reinforces that combustion testing is the most important thing to do on heating-related calls.

Another part of our culture is ensuring our team correctly installs and configures new HVAC equipment. That is why we have a technician (generally the selling technician) return to every new installation to double-check every unit's combustion, refrigerant levels, and airflow and make any final adjustments.

Truth be told, several business consultants told me this practice is inefficient. They said installers should be able to make final adjustments when installing new equipment.

For us, the added cost of having a

technician go back for a final inspection is worth it.

It drives home to our customers and technicians the importance of ensuring we correctly set up equipment. This is non-negotiable. And our actions, not just our words, reflect this.

## SIMPLICITY

Have you ever been asked to take a survey at a store? When I was at the supermarket recently, a survey popped up on the screen at the payment kiosk. The survey asked, "How was your experience in our store today?" Yes, it was only one question.

People who create surveys understand that asking someone to answer a second question dramatically decreases the number of responses. Why this happens is common sense: Most people are in a hurry, prefer simplicity, or don't like wasting time. Two questions are twice as complex. Avoiding complications is also why people ignore instructions and try to figure it out on their own.

A technician's time is a valuable resource. They can only put a certain amount of time and effort towards each call. That's why it's essential to think about keeping your processes simple and easy to follow.

For us, as an example, the most straightforward tool we have found to incorporate performance measurement into our maintenance process is an app called **measureQuick®**. However, getting our technicians to use **measureQuick** and everything else they do requires some planning.

We had to evaluate all aspects of our maintenance routines to determine whether something truly provided enough value vs. adding **measureQuick**. We asked ourselves the following questions:

- What is the purpose of our maintenance visit?
- What ratio of inspection vs. cleaning will provide good value to a customer in the time allotted for the service if we add **measureQuick**?
- Can we use the **80-20 principle** to determine what provides 80% of the value we currently do on a maintenance call?

*Can't we just have the technicians do everything they were doing before and add more to it?*

We could try. The danger is that it will take more time. And no one understands the value of a technician's time more than the technician. Chances are high that something else gets dropped if you add one thing. We should choose what is and is not included instead of leaving it up to the technician.

One more thought: everyone's time is valuable and finite. A complicated process means more time to get new systems implemented.



### ENGAGEMENT

The final key is engaging the technicians. We find that if we want to implement something, it takes a lot more than one meeting. There is something in marketing called the "Rule of Seven." This rule states that a person needs to hear a message at least seven times before remembering it.

In the HVAC industry, there are countless things we can implement to help technicians. We try to limit the number of things we implement yearly to only a handful. Doing this allows us to spend more time ensuring that the most important things get implemented successfully. Since we focus on just a few things, we can see what doesn't work more quickly and be more responsive with adjustments.

One example is our implementation of gas leak testing on maintenance visits. Around a year ago, we began pushing our technicians to test for gas leaks on every furnace maintenance call.

Some technicians caught on quickly, and others were slow adopters. As we discussed the dangers of gas leaks and showed shared technicians' successes, stragglers began to buy into our philosophy. All our technicians are consistently testing for gas leaks,

and we are seeing the results.

### BONUS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Another strategy that helps us to roll out new processes successfully is having a "Champion." A champion is a technician who is selected to do a pilot of any new tool that we want to use. This technician then shares their experience with the rest of the team and helps drive the acceptance of that tool or process.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Performance accountability is more than just keeping track of KPIs. The ultimate goal is to create a culture through easy-to-understand processes and technician engagement that allows our company to thrive. 



**Brendan Squires** has been in the HVAC industry for more than a decade. After attaining a degree in economics, Brendan worked at **Online-Access**, helping build contractor websites

as well as analyze website traffic data before moving to **Vincent's Heating & Plumbing** where he ran a service truck for a number of years. Now Brendan serves as the tech advisor, helping technicians be successful and productive in their roles. To contact Brendan, go to [ncilink.com/ContactMe](http://ncilink.com/ContactMe).

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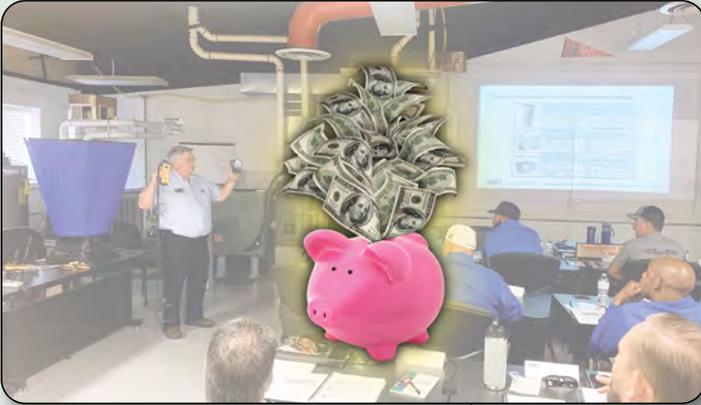
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## NCI Bucks Savings Estimator

National Comfort Institute (NCI) members have access to a specialized partner rebate program that provides them training savings based on the purchases they make from the organization's preferred vendors.

The program is called the [NCI Member Rewards Training Incentive Partner Program \(TIPP\)](#). TIPP puts any earned rebate dollars to work by converting them to [NCI Bucks](#) which members can use towards any NCI educational event. Bucks help cover the costs of training their field service and installation teams in High-Performance HVAC™ system testing, measuring, and diagnostics activities.

By the way, NCI has 18 vendor partners including:

- Amana/Daikin/Goodman
- Arzel Zoning
- The Energy Conservatory
- Online Access
- and many more.

**NCI recently created an estimator** for contractors considering membership to see how many NCI Bucks they could be earning from purchases from qualified NCI vendor partners.

If you are interested in using this estimator, call the NCI Customer Care Line at

**800-633-7058** and one of the representatives will walk you through the process and send you a link.

Many members currently earn thousands of dollars in NCI Training Bucks each year!

They use them to buy seats in NCI classes, online training, private onsite training, and seats to the [High-Performance HVAC Summit](#). Nearly half a million NCI Bucks were earned by NCI Members just in the last year!

If you are a member and are not getting all of your valuable NCI Bucks, call the help line and ask the NCI representatives to explain how you can take advantage of this terrific program.

## Meet NCI Instructor Casey Contreras

Casey joined the NCI team in 2015 and brings many years of residential and light commercial service and installation experience to his position.



This experience includes:

- Add-on/replacement commissioning
- Managing a service department
- Training himself and others.

He attended numerous NCI classes and became certified in residential and light commercial air balancing, HVAC

system performance, duct system optimization, and CO & Combustion.

Today Casey instructs virtually every NCI discipline and writes for *High-Performance HVAC Today* magazine.

## Online Live Training

NCI's Online Live Training classes offer contractors opportunities to keep their technical teams trained and on the cutting edge in their marketplaces. And yes, you can use NCI Bucks to offset the costs of these sessions.



Did you know that a number of these online live courses are good for a variety of NCI recertifications including:

- [Airflow Testing and Diagnostics](#)
- [Carbon Monoxide and Combustion Recertification](#)
- [Duct System Optimization](#)
- [Residential System Performance.](#)

These online courses are led live by NCI's expert instructors and are usually offered in four-hour sections. Get re-certified from the comfort of your home or office!

In fact, the new **Airflow Testing and Diagnostics 3.0** classes go live online January 7th and 8th. This class will re-certify your technicians in Duct System Optimization, Residential System Performance, and other disciplines.

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



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# Twelve High-Performance New Year Resolutions



**Dominick Guarino**  
is publisher of  
*High-Performance  
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and CEO of National  
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**J**anuary is always a great time to look back at the previous year and review your company's progress. While it's a good idea to look at your financials, it's also a good time to take stock of who you are compared to who you want to become.

If your goal is to grow as a High-Performance HVAC™ contractor, below are 12 resolutions for the new year. You don't have to follow these exactly, but there is a logical order to them.

You can decide to adopt some or all of them, or add new ones. Think of this as a starting point.

The resolutions are laid out as one per month on purpose so you don't get overwhelmed. Many of our readers have already successfully implemented one or more of these actions in their business – congratulations!

While these resolutions are in a specific sequence, be sure to focus on the ones you need to work on in the order that makes most sense for you.

**JANUARY** – Create a system to hold your team accountable for [measuring Static Pressures](#) on every service and maintenance call. I know this isn't always easy. A carrot works much better than a stick here. Look for ways to recognize and reward the behavior you want to see.

**FEBRUARY** – Invest in diagnostic tools like the TEC TrueFlow® Grid and measureQuick® software. These tools make your field testing faster and more accurate.

**MARCH** – Assign a *champion* in your company to spearhead High-Performance. Your chances of successful implementation become exponentially greater when someone is responsible for keeping your high-performance fire burning.

This doesn't have to be a full-time position.

Typically it is a responsibility for someone already on your team. Choose wisely – pick the person who is most excited about the direction.

**APRIL** – Add an [Air Upgrade](#) option to every replacement proposal that needs it. You will quickly find this applies to most or all systems you test.

Be sure to use a flat-rate approach to your Air Upgrades. Perhaps create two or three packages, so you can quickly pick one to best match the specific situation.

**MAY** – Add [Airflow Testing and Balancing](#) to every installation. A high-performance contractor should strive to test-out every system they replace or renovate. While some may not be perfectly balanced without additional duct improvements, you can always proportionally balance the best you can.

**JUNE** – Propose [Duct System Renovations](#) where needed. When an Air Upgrade alone won't work, it's time to propose a renovation. To do this you will likely need to include full system testing up front – be sure to charge for it!

**JULY** – Create a system to track your KPIs ([Key Performance Indicators](#)). You could include things like leads generated from service, number of Air Upgrades, system renovations, etc. Include whatever metrics you feel are important to measure.

**AUGUST** – Implement a way to bank leads from static pressure and airflow testing on service calls. You can go back to the reports in slower months and reach out to those customers for further testing. If done right, this approach will generate both renovation and equipment replacement work during your slow times. 

This article continues online at [ncilink.com/0125-OMT2](http://ncilink.com/0125-OMT2). That is where the final four resolutions can be found.



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#### PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING

##### **Commercial Air Balancing Certification Program**

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February 18-20: Morristown, TN

##### **Duct System Optimization and Residential Air Balancing Certification Program**

January 14-16: Tampa, FL  
January 14-16: Hartford, CT  
January 28-30: Phoenix, AZ  
February 11-13: Lewisville, TX  
February 11-13: Sacramento, CA  
February 18-20: Kissimmee, FL  
February 25-27: Glen Burnie, MD  
March 4-6: Monroeville, PA  
March 4-6: Eagan, MN

##### **Combustion Performance and Carbon Monoxide Safety Training Program**

January 14-16: Eagan, MN  
January 21-23: Morristown, TN

##### **Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing Certification Bundle**

January 28-30: Troy, MI  
March 18-20: Salt Lake City, UT  
March 25-27: Phoenix, AZ  
March 25-27: Johnstown, CO  
March 25-27: Livonia, MI

#### PUBLIC ONLINE LIVE TRAINING

##### **Airflow Testing and Diagnostics - ONLINE LIVE**

January 7-8

##### **Commercial System Performance Training Program - ONLINE LIVE**

January 14-15 - Part One  
January 21-22 - Part Two

##### **Combustion Performance and Carbon Monoxide Safety Recertification Program -**

**ONLINE LIVE**

February 18-19

#### \*SCE SPONSORED LIVE TRAINING

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##### **Commercial Air Balancing Training Program**

January 7-9: Anaheim, CA

##### **Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing Certification Bundle**

January 21-23: Anaheim, CA

##### **Combustion Performance and Carbon Monoxide Safety Training Program**

February 4-6: Anaheim, CA **SOLD OUT**

#### \*SCE SPONSORED LIVE TRAINING (continued)

##### **Airflow Testing and Diagnostics**

February 25: Anaheim, CA

##### **Refrigerant-Side Performance Certification Program**

February 26-27: Anaheim, CA

##### **Hydronic Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing**

March 4-5: Anaheim, CA

##### **Duct System Optimization and Residential Air Balancing Certification Program**

March 11-13: Anaheim, CA

##### **Commercial HVAC System Performance Program**

March 18-19: Anaheim, CA



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