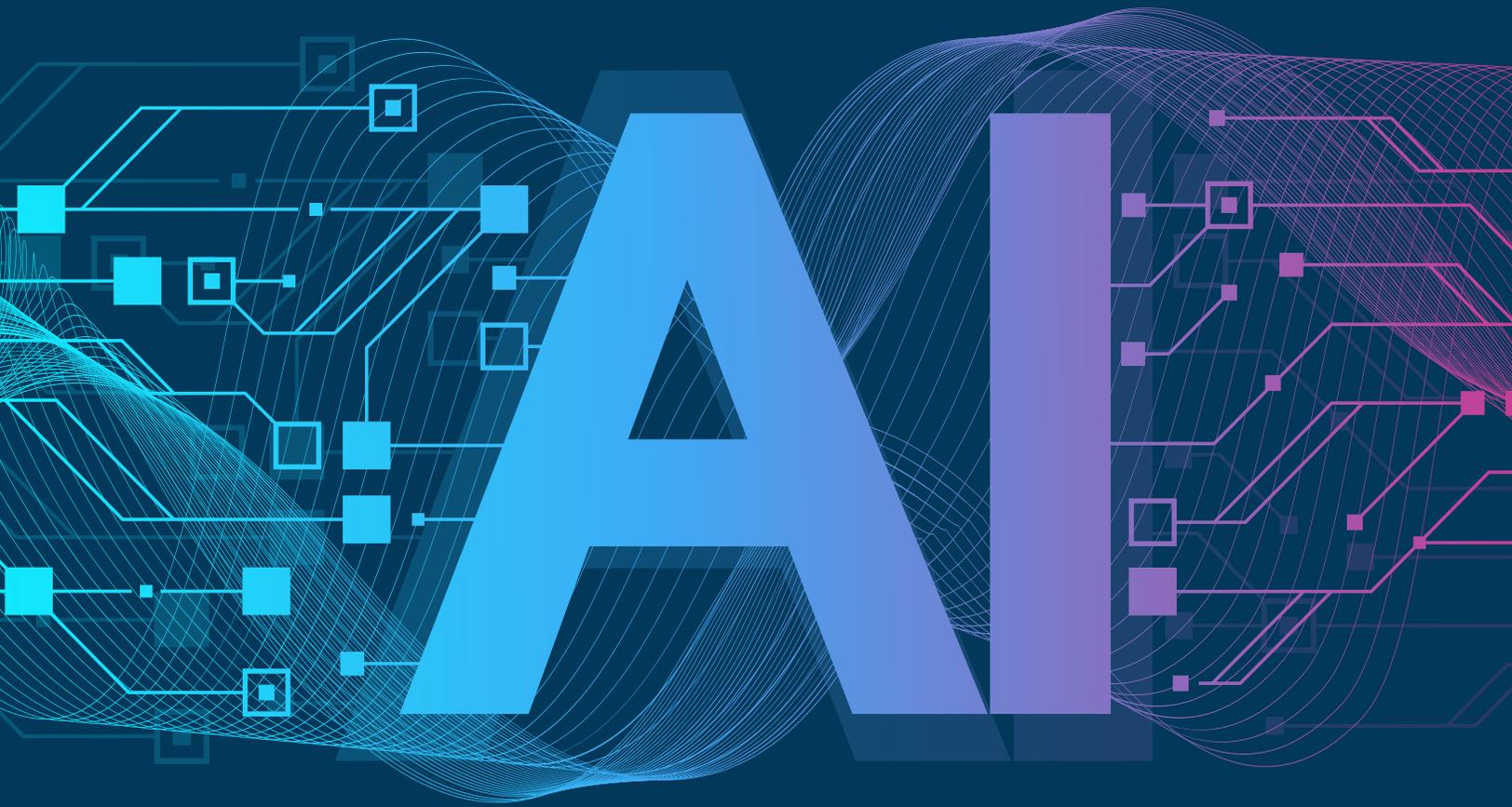


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- **A Look at Cybersecurity for HVAC Contractors**
- **Craftsmanship Receipts: Focus on Product Results, Not the Product Itself**
- **Contractor Spotlight: An Evolution to Excellence - The Cardinal Heating Story**

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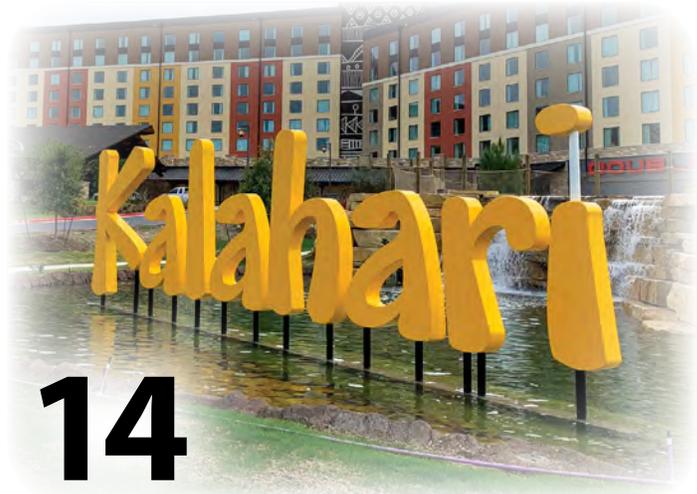


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AI, AI Captain! Setting Sail Toward Better Understanding of Data Privacy



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

No, this is not a call for shipping out on a cruise. It is a call to pay attention to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data privacy for your customers and your companies.

This month the magazine focuses on going digital. Once upon a time, that meant computerizing your company, converting paper files to electronic ones, implementing business and system management software solutions and more.

In the 21st century, it takes on a much different meaning. Sure, a lot of HVAC equipment use on-board sensors and electronics to monitor and gather data. And High-Performance HVAC™ contractors use digital instruments to do the same — all in an effort to provide customers with more comfort and efficiency from their investments in mechanical systems.

Today, across all the supply chains, concerns have arisen about security and cybercrime. I address some of that and what it means in the article, “*A Look at Cyber Security for HVAC Contractors*,” on [page 10](#).

Your customers are also concerned, at least according to a 2025 study done by Copeland Corp. titled, “*Smart Home Data Privacy*.” The study, which focused on smart thermostat data gathering, surveyed 2,000 American homeowners and showed a sharp **increase in smart home technology use** with a **decrease in confidence about data privacy**.

Over half of the homeowners surveyed don't understand how their smart thermostat data is used, yet most are willing to switch to more privacy-focused options.

Furthermore the study highlights that homeowners:

Misunderstand Data Collection — 52% of homeowners don't know how data is collected from their smart thermostats. This shows a

significant knowledge gap and raises concerns about uninformed data sharing.

Distrust Manufacturers — Homeowners who don't own a smart thermostat are less confident (58%) that manufacturers handle data responsibly, compared to 73% of smart thermostat owners. This distrust may be a barrier to adoption.

Don't Pay Attention to Privacy Policies — Only 14% of smart thermostat owners said they researched a manufacturer's data privacy policy before making a purchase, suggesting a lack of due diligence and awareness about how personal data may be used or shared.

Have Concerns Amplified by AI Integration — As AI becomes more integrated into smart home systems, there's heightened anxiety about how it may influence or expand data collection without transparent user consent.

Desire More Control and Transparency — 70% of homeowners are willing to replace their current thermostat with one that offers stronger privacy protections; a sentiment especially strong among millennials (80%).

These concerns point to a need for clearer communication, better privacy education, and stronger commitments from manufacturers to responsible data practices.

The use of AI in HVAC equipment and test instruments will continue. There are a lot of positives to that including being able to **forecast the impact** of changing equipment on comfort and energy use, predicting malfunctions, and more.

On a more positive note, check out David Richardson's article on using digital technology, with testing and measuring, to **create receipts** that prove craftsmanship. My point is to be aware of how this tech impacts customers and your business. Use it smartly and you can cruise the seas of opportunity and success. Safe Sailing! 

Written by HVAC Professionals for HVAC Professionals

TEC TRUEFLOW® GRID FORECASTING

I'm always looking for tools that streamline High-Performance HVAC™ diagnostics and boost confidence in system recommendations. That's why I've found [The Energy Conservatory \(TEC\) TrueFlow® Grid](#), with forecasting capabilities, to be a valuable asset in my work.

Forecasting, in this context, is all about using Fan Laws to predict how changes to a system — like upgrading equipment, modifying ductwork, or replacing filters — will impact static pressure and overall performance.

Forecasting allows me to model "what if" scenarios before picking up a wrench. With this tool, I can see how the system will respond to those changes and ensure the performance gains we promise

will actually be realized.

What I appreciate most is how it simplifies a complex process. [Fan Law 2](#) can be intimidating — it's math-heavy and not intuitive for most techs in the field.

But this tool turns that algebra into an intuitive interface using sliders and real-time feedback. It demystifies pressure drop and airflow changes, making forecasting accessible, even for those newer to system optimization.

Of course, having a basic understanding of pressure drops is essential to use this instrument effectively. That's where foundational training like National Comfort Institute's [Airflow Testing and Diagnostics](#) and [Duct System Optimization](#) courses come in.

Once that's in place, the TrueFlow Grid makes forecasting incredibly easy to



apply in the field.

At the end of the day, this is about trust — being able to tell a homeowner, "Here's what we're recommending, and here's why it will work."

Forecasting gives us that confidence. And in a competitive, performance-driven market, that's a game changer.

For an informative video on forecasting with the TrueFlow Grid, go to ncilink.com/TFG-Fcasting. 

— by Adam Mufich, NCI Instructor

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An Evolution to Excellence: The Cardinal Heating Story

In the competitive world of HVAC contracting, success is not solely about installing heating and cooling systems; it's about delivering measurable comfort, efficiency, and reliability to customers.



Keith Ouimette

For Keith Ouimette, Chief Operating Officer of [Cardinal Heating, Cooling, Plumbing, and Electric](#) in Sun Prairie, WI, this philosophy has been the driving force behind the company's evolution.

Through strategic training initiatives, a commitment to High-Performance HVAC™ practices, and a relentless focus on customer satisfaction, Cardinal Heating has set itself apart in an industry often resistant to change.

A LEGACY BUILT ON DEDICATION AND HARD WORK

The year was 1984 and it was auspicious for many reasons. It was the year that [Apple Computer ran its first promotional television](#) ad during the Superbowl and changed everything. For us rock-n-rollers out there, it was also the year that Bruce Springsteen released his *Born in the U.S.A* album.

Let's face it, those were just a few

good things that happened in a year that was full of bad news.

Another good news story is that in 1984, Keith Ouimette's father, Rick, founded Cardinal Heating in Sun Prairie as a small family-owned operation run out of their home. Sun Prairie is located just east of Madison, WI and is known as being the birthplace of artist [Georgia O'Keeffe](#).

"My father worked for a couple of other heating companies before deciding to go out on his own," Keith recalls. "He saw a need for a company that prioritized quality and service above all else." With a single van and dedication to hard work, Rick laid the foundation for what would become one of the most respected HVAC businesses in the region.



Keith and his brother, Craig, grew up immersed in the business. "We were out there as kids, passing out flyers and helping with odd jobs," Keith says. "It was a family effort from the start." Over the years, Cardinal Heating expanded,

eventually purchasing its first office building in 1991, a milestone that signified its growth and stability.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE: TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

One of the key differentiators for Cardinal is its emphasis on training and continuous education. "We've always been thirsty for more knowledge," Keith states.

The company is a strong proponent of [National Comfort Institute \(NCI\)](#) certification and other industry-leading training programs.

"It's something we value immensely because it ensures that our technicians are always improving and staying ahead of the curve."

Cardinal Heating took its commitment to training to the next level by establishing [Cardinal University](#), a five-month internal training program designed to produce highly skilled technicians.

"We found that recruiting alone wasn't enough to keep up with our growth," Keith explains. "We needed a structured program to develop talent from within."

The results speak for themselves—today, approximately 50% of the company's HVAC technicians and installers have come through the program.

Keith believes that investing in people is the key to long-term success.



“We’re not just hiring employees; we’re cultivating professionals who are committed to the trade,” he says.

The program has been particularly successful in attracting young talent, including recent high school graduates and individuals making career transitions.

“The great thing is that they don’t come in with bad habits. We train them the right way from day one.”

THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC™ DIFFERENCE

In an industry where traditional approaches still dominate, Cardinal Heating has embraced [High-Performance HVAC contracting](#), a methodology focused on using system testing and diagnostics to optimize efficiency and comfort.

“Honestly, nobody else around here is doing what we do,” Keith notes. “Most contractors install a system and move on, but we go deeper.”

Through [advanced static pressure testing](#), [combustion analysis](#), and [system performance](#) measurements, the company ensures that every installation meets strict performance benchmarks. This approach not only differentiates Cardinal Heating

from competitors but also results in higher customer satisfaction.

“We’ve had customers who were initially skeptical about duct modifications or system upgrades,” Keith says. “But once they experience the difference, they tell us, ‘I can’t believe how much better this is. I wish I had done this years ago.’”

OVERCOMING INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Despite the clear benefits of the high-performance approach, Keith acknowledges that [educating customers](#) — and even employees — can be a challenge.



“Sometimes, our technicians hear from customers who’ve been told by another contractor that nothing is wrong with their system,” he says. “That can be frustrating, but we tell our team to stay focused on what we know is right.”

This dedication to doing things the right way extends beyond technical expertise.

“We didn’t build our reputation by installing equipment and walking away,” Keith emphasizes. “We follow up, we check in, and if something’s not right, we make it right.”

This commitment to customer service has been instrumental in fostering long-term relationships and generating positive word-of-mouth referrals.

ADAPTING TO CHANGES AND MARKET TRENDS

The HVAC industry is evolving with new technologies, refrigerant regulations, and electrification trends reshaping the landscape. Keith sees these changes as opportunities rather than obstacles.

“The industry is always changing,” he says. “The most important thing is knowing where to find information and having the right resources.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cardinal Heating saw massive growth, driven by increased demand for home comfort solutions.

Ouimette says that people were home more, so they wanted their HVAC systems to be working perfectly. While the surge in demand has

since leveled off, he believes that the company's focus on quality service will continue to drive success in the post-pandemic world.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As Cardinal Heating moves forward, Keith remains focused on innovation and growth. The company continues to refine its training programs, expand its service offerings, and stay ahead of industry trends.

"We're always looking for ways to improve," he says. "Whether it's better training, better technology, or better customer communication, we never want to stand still."

For young technicians entering the trade, Keith offers simple but powerful advice: "Invest in yourself. No matter



how much you think you know, there's always more to learn."

This mindset has been a guiding principle at Cardinal Heating and will undoubtedly continue to fuel its success for years to come.

As Keith and his team push the boundaries of High-Performance HVAC, one thing remains clear — Cardinal Heating is not just in the business of heating and cooling. They're in

the business of delivering comfort, efficiency, and trust to every customer they serve.

It is for these and many other reasons that the editorial team at **High-Performance HVAC Today** magazine chose **Cardinal Heating, Cooling, Plumbing, and Electric** as the May *Contractor Spotlight*. Congratulations to Keith Ouimette and the entire team at Cardinal. 



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A Look at Cybersecurity for HVAC Contractors

Did you know that the idea of artificial intelligence (AI) first saw the light of day back in 1956? Ten years later, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) team created something known as [ELIZA](#). ELIZA is an early natural language processing computer program developed to explore communication between humans and machines.

That led to considerable changes to machine learning in computer science and opened the door to concepts surrounding the idea of “thinking machines.”

In 1997, IBM’s Deep Blue computer defeated a world chess champion named Garry Kasparov, marking a significant milestone in AI.

From there forward, advances in AI continued to grow by the proverbial leaps and bounds.

SCIENCE FICTION COMES TO LIFE

Does this sound like the plot line for the ***Terminator*** movie franchise? Well it’s not. AI has become the cornerstone for all the advances in computer science that we have today.

Technology development in the HVAC industry paralleled advancements in AI. According to several sources, the two finally met with the development of Smart Technology for thermostats.

These thermostats use machine learning algorithms to “understand” homeowner and building

occupant preferences and optimize temperature settings accordingly. The advent of IoT (Internet of Things) technology then enabled real-time monitoring and control of HVAC systems.

This is great stuff. It leads to many great things for contractors and homeowners alike, from creating predictive maintenance schedules to reducing carbon footprints through energy optimization, Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) management, Smart Building integration, and more.

It also benefits the design side by incorporating smart technology into advanced, built-in sensors and IoT integration capabilities for HVAC equip-

ment, security systems, etc. It is science fiction coming to life.

ADVANCEMENTS OPEN THE DOOR TO SCARY STUFF

Today, the “*cyberverse*” and the HVAC universe intersect at so many levels. In this age of social unrest, political upheaval, along with domestic and

foreign cyber-criminal behavior, cyber-based tech can pose a real security threat to contractors and consumers alike.

Cybersecurity is no longer just a concern for big tech companies or financial institutions, though the threat in those arenas is clear. For example, in May 2021, a cyber attack on the [Colonial Pipeline](#) shut down that vital artery used to supply gas and jet fuel to nearly 45% of the U.S. East Coast.





More recently, Russia launched cyber attacks against governments that spoke out against their invasion of Ukraine.

In 2024, China's cyber attacks on Taiwan amounted to 2.4 million daily attempts, and Chinese hackers breached a third party for the U.S. Treasury Department that same year.

Like any other business that relies on connected systems and digital infrastructure, HVAC contractors are also vulnerable to cyber threats. With the rise of Smart HVAC systems, remote monitoring, and automated controls, the HVAC industry is increasingly interconnected — and with that connectivity comes risk.

WHAT IS CYBERCRIME?

Cybercrime is any criminal activity involving a computer, network, or digital device. These crimes range from [data breaches](#) and [ransomware attacks](#) to [phishing scams](#) and [system infiltrations](#).

Cybercriminals exploit software, hardware, or human error vulnerabilities to gain unauthorized access to sensitive information or disrupt business operations.

For HVAC contractors, cybercrime isn't just about stolen credit card information — it can mean losing

control over critical systems, compromising customer data, or even being used as an entry point for attackers to infiltrate larger organizations.

HOW CYBER ATTACKS IMPACT CONTRACTORS AND CUSTOMERS

The HVAC industry has become a target for cybercriminals for several reasons. Many HVAC contractors work with large commercial clients, including hospitals, data centers, and corporate offices. If an HVAC company's systems are compromised, it can provide cybercriminals with a backdoor into these critical infrastructures.

One of the most infamous cyberattacks in recent history involved an HVAC contractor. In 2013, [Target](#), one of the largest retail chains in the U.S., suffered a massive data breach that exposed the payment information of 40 million customers. [I wrote about this attack](#) in another HVAC trade magazine in 2014.

The attackers gained access to Target's sensitive data through an HVAC subcontractor with remote access to Target's refrigeration and HVAC systems. The breach cost Target hundreds of millions of dollars in damages and settlements, highlighting the importance of cybersecurity for all vendors that interact with sensitive systems.

But it's not just large corporations that are at risk. Small and mid-sized HVAC businesses are also vulnerable. Ransomware attacks — where hackers encrypt a company's data and demand a ransom to restore access — are becoming more common.

According to a 2023 report from [Cybersecurity Ventures](#), global ransomware damages may exceed **\$265 billion by 2031!**

Many small businesses, including HVAC contractors, lack the resources to recover from such attacks and may be forced to pay the ransom or shut down operations altogether.

COMMON CYBER THREATS IN THE HVAC INDUSTRY

HVAC contractors face a variety of cyber threats, including:

- 1. Phishing Attacks** – Cybercriminals send fraudulent emails or messages that appear to be from legitimate sources to trick employees into revealing passwords or clicking malicious links.
- 2. Ransomware** – Attackers encrypt business data and demand payment to restore access, often crippling operations until the ransom is paid.
- 3. Remote Access Exploits** – Many HVAC systems are monitored and

controlled remotely. If login credentials are compromised, hackers can take control of critical infrastructure.

4. **Data Breaches** – Personal and financial information of customers and employees can be stolen and sold on the dark web.
5. **Supply Chain Attacks** – Hackers use HVAC contractors as a gateway to infiltrate larger organizations, as seen in the Target breach.

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS FROM CYBER THREATS

While cybersecurity may seem overwhelming, HVAC contractors can take simple steps to protect their businesses and customers from cyber threats. Here are six tips to consider:

- ❑ **Implement Strong Password Policies** – Require employees to use strong, unique passwords and enable **multi-factor authentication** (MFA) for all remote access systems
- ❑ **Regularly Update Software and Systems** – Keeping software, operating systems, and security patches up to date helps close vulnerabilities that hackers might exploit
- ❑ **Train Employees on Cybersecurity Best Practices** – Many cyber-attacks start with human error. **Regular training** on recognizing phishing scams and safe online practices can reduce risks
- ❑ **Use Secure Remote Access Solutions** – If remote monitoring is necessary, use a **secure virtual private network (VPN)** and restrict access only to authorized personnel
- ❑ **Backup Data Regularly** –



Regular backups ensure that you can restore systems without paying a ransom in the event of a ransomware attack

- ❑ **Work with Cybersecurity Experts** – Consider hiring an IT professional or **cybersecurity consultant** to conduct risk assessments and help you to implement security measures.

THE FUTURE OF CYBERSECURITY IN HVAC

Cybersecurity will only become more critical as HVAC systems become more connected and automated. The rise of IoT means that HVAC equipment, thermostats, other accessories, and ventilation systems can be accessed remotely, increasing the attack surface for cybercriminals.

Contractors who invest in cybersecurity now will protect their businesses and build trust with clients who are increasingly aware of digital security risks.

Cybersecurity expert **Bruce Schneier** once said, “*Security is a process, not a product.*” This statement is especially true for HVAC contractors. It is not a one-time fix but an ongoing effort to stay ahead of emerging threats. By taking proactive steps, HVAC firms can

safeguard their operations, protect customers, and ensure a secure future in an increasingly digital world.

CYBERSECURITY NOT OPTIONAL

Cybersecurity is no longer optional for HVAC contractors – it’s essential. With AI technologies continuing to evolve and the HVAC industry’s increasing reliance on Smart Systems and remote access, we can become prime targets.

From ransomware attacks to data breaches, the risks are real and growing. However, by implementing best practices and staying informed, HVAC contractors can defend themselves and their customers from cyber threats.

What do you do to protect yourself and your customers? Please drop me a note and share your experiences at ncilink.com/ContactMe. 



Mike Weil is the Director of Communications for **National Comfort Institute, Inc.** He has been in this role since 2014. He also serves as editor-in-chief of **High-Performance HVAC Today** magazine. He previously

spent 34 years on another national HVAC magazine. He can be reached at ncilink.com/ContactMe.

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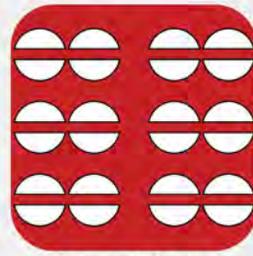
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Countdown to Summit 2025

Getting All The “Deets”

By now, most of you are aware that [National Comfort Institute’s \(NCI\) Summit 2025](#) conference and tradeshow is coming to Austin, TX, September 9-12, 2025. Most of you know that [registration is open](#), [early bird rates](#) are available, and [discounted hotel reservations](#) are open at the [Kalahari Resorts at Round Rock](#).

But what you don’t know are the details of the event itself. Well here are some key “deets” for you.

First, this year’s theme is “*Navigate Your Path to Performance*.” With that in mind, NCI has several contractors who will lead a number of breakout sessions and share how they continue to successfully implement this approach.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Alana Ward, president of Baggett Heating and Cooling, Clarksville, TN, will share how she fosters a culture of high-performance accountability where technology helps her team to be transparent, accountable, and communicate clearly.

John Boylan, general manager of Lakeside Service in Brighton, MI, strongly believes in using service and maintenance testing and measuring to generate sales leads. In his session, John will highlight how his

team creates quality leads with virtually no competition and high conversion rates.

Tom Hearn, president of Hearn Plumbing, Heating, and Air, Madison, OH, is all about cash flow. In his session, you will learn how the Hearn team uses high-performance maintenance to

boost passive cash flow and allows techs to streamline their workflow. Selling high-performance maintenance agreements helps drive his company’s growth, and he will explain how.

Will Horner, sales manager of Canco ClimateCare Heating and Air Conditioning, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, shares what he calls

“*The Canco Way*” to help customers buy into the four pillars of safety, health, comfort, and efficiency. The secret sauce: get customers to tell you what they want. He explains how to do that in this session.

Zach Ortwine, owner of Southeast Clean Air Solutions, Henrico, VA, will explain how to bridge the gap between duct restoration and duct renovation, and access a goldmine of opportunities.

Mitch Bailey, owner of Air Heroes, Modesto, CA, has spent decades championing high-performance solutions in

HVAC. His commitment to quality and performance set the foundation for success as California’s electrification initiatives accelerated demand for heat pumps statewide. Mitch will show you how to make the electrification movement work for your company and customers.

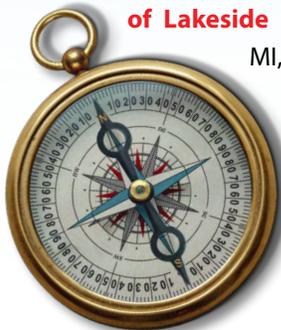


Come for the education and networking, stay for a vacation and fun.

Plus, the NCI instructor team will present a number of sessions. From **Al D’Ambola** teaching you how to implement pressure testing on every service call to **David Richardson** demystifying top combustion taboos.

Then **Adam Mufich** will cover offering duct renovations, and **Paul Wieboldt** discusses moving away from being tradesmen and toward becoming craftsmen.

This year’s sessions will help you create the right environment navigating high performance. 





The NCI High-Performance HVAC™ Summit Heads to Austin, Texas!

NCI Summit 2025 promises to be one of the year's best events. So join your fellow high-performance contractors and explore ways to move further along the Path to Performance. In the process, learn more ways to delight your customers and lead your marketplace for 2026 and beyond. Don't forget that Summit is not just about breakout sessions.

SUMMIT SPECIAL EVENTS

Welcome Reception and Celebration: Once again, it's time to meet with old friends and make new ones at the Welcome Extravaganza sponsored by *Daikin Comfort Technologies*. Join your fellow contractors from across North America to celebrate successes and learn about the opportunities a high-performance approach offers.

NCI Partners Reception and Tradeshow: NCI's partners help make this conference possible. Show your appreciation by attending the trade show events. Who knows, you might find that next great product or idea!

Idea Meeting: Speaking of ideas, this event is one of the most popular of the conference. NCI invites all contractor attendees to this two-part event, where each participant can propose one or more ideas in the areas of lead generation and sales. Don't forget to bring your ideas and a \$20 entrance fee. The best ideas split the pot for great cash prizes!

Awards Banquet: This long-standing tradition is one of the highlights of every Summit. Join us in honoring the best of the best High-Performance HVAC™ contractors. You may be one of them!

Stay tuned for more information as we get closer to Summit. If you have any questions, call our Customer Care line at **800-633-7058**.



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Focus on Product Results, Not the Product Itself

Receipts are most definitely an American way of life. We rarely buy anything without getting a receipt. Some of us save them for years because receipts prove that we got what we paid for.

Here's a fun fact: Receipts weren't always an option. It wasn't until John Patterson bought the patent for the cash register and founded the [National Cash Register Company](#) in 1880 that the receipt concept began.

At first, the acceptance of Patterson's new technology was slow. Store owners had a hard time seeing the value in his cash registers and were resistant to purchasing them.

To solve this problem, Patterson created a demand for the receipt instead of trying to sell store owners his cash register. ***He focused on the result of his product, not the product it-self.*** This small shift in thinking changed how we do business everyday in the United States. Let's look at what the HVAC industry can learn from this change in thinking and how you might apply it to High-Performance HVAC™ systems and your business.

YOUR PRODUCT AND YOUR RESULTS

It's important to understand the difference between your product and your results. Have you ever considered the difference between the two? If you believe that HVAC equipment is your

product, I think you're discounting the value you bring to the table. That's because HVAC equipment is **NOT** your product – you are!

Let's go one step further. The HVAC equipment is also not the HVAC system. If that sounds odd, think about the equipment for what it is – a selection of components you put together. Ten

contractors can install the same equipment in separate projects, and each project will have different outcomes.

The product and the results are not the same.

You provide the HVAC system which includes the design, the equipment, and the duct system. That is your product. How well it performs depends on your skill and your craftsmanship. By combining your

specialized skills and training, you can deliver the health, safety, comfort, and efficiency your customers expect.

EQUIPMENT YELLOW LABELS **ARE NOT RECEIPTS**

There are standards in place to rate HVAC equipment efficiency in a laboratory environment. The yellow label that shows the equipment's AFUE, or SEER rating is a receipt from the laboratory rating results under one set of test conditions.

Many professionals in our industry purchase equipment and assume the yellow label equals reality in the field. Unfortunately, lab-rated efficiency is not the same as field-installed efficiency.

It's time for our industry to change the game like John Patterson did.

He focused on the results of his product, not the product itself.



While they serve a purpose, yellow labels do not prove the craftsmanship of a field installation.

Remember, receipts are proof of purchase. We show the results of buying a product on them. So, what results are you trying to show?

If you're only concerned with equipment efficiency in a lab environment, then the yellow labels will work great for you. However, if you're looking to focus customers on your specialized skills, you'll need to look past equipment efficiency.

Our industry is missing a receipt for the final installation. We need the result for the assembled components plus each contractor's unique abilities and craftsmanship.

THE NEED TO PROVE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Since yellow labels don't prove installation skills, our industry needs a different approach. It requires measurements from the HVAC system to provide a craftsmanship receipt.

Anyone can look at an installation

and tell if it is sloppy or neat. But does it work like it's supposed to? Many aspects of craftsmanship are hidden, so we need a way to make them visible.

Tough Question: *How does a customer know they got a quality installation if the only receipt they get is for the components and not the skill involved in assembling them?*

Tougher Answer: *They don't.*

Our industry has much to offer customers. Unfortunately, it's easy to forget how special what we do is. Consider a few ways you provide craftsmanship:

- Using industry best practices for design and installation
- Understanding duct system material selection and installation
- Knowing about refrigerant line design and installation
- Being skilled at purging with nitrogen while brazing
- Performing proper evacuation with a micron gauge
- Providing condensate line installa-

tion and drain protection

- Being trained to use proper refrigerant charging practices
- Being trained and certified in combustion safety testing of fuel-fired equipment
- Providing accurate airflow testing and balancing.

These are a few of the things that most customers will never see. However, customers **WILL** notice the poor results if any of the above bullet points are missing or left out. Sometimes the results are instant, others may take years to appear.

I'm sure you can expand the list above, and I encourage you to do so. These hidden gems make you different. Isn't it time to make these principles visible through measurement and data analysis instead of keeping them hidden?

A TALE OF TWO HVAC SYSTEMS

During a recent private training session, we created two craftsmanship receipts. This company knew they did good work and were curious to

see how well their systems performed. They found the perfect scenario – the home of one of the company’s comfort advisors.

His home had two systems in it, and he only recently moved. The company had installed a two-ton air conditioning system for an addition. There was a separate four-ton system for the existing part of the house that had been installed by a competitor.

The two-ton system installation looked great. The team measured airflow from all the supply registers with a quality air balancing hood and totaled up the airflow feeding the area. Next, they measured the enthalpy change across the system at the supply registers and return grilles with Bluetooth psychrometer probes.

They combined these readings to determine how many cooling Btus the system was delivering into the conditioned space. Once the team knew the delivered Btus, they divided those Btus by the equipment’s rated cooling Btus under the conditions they tested. This step showed how well the installation performed.

The comfort advisor and installation manager were both pleased to find that this system, which they designed, delivered about 95% of the equipment’s laboratory-rated capacity. It takes an extraordinary installation to achieve a system performance score over 90%. The craftsmanship receipt proved they installed exactly what they said they

would and proved it through measurements.

Next, it was time to test the four-ton system installed by the competition. The



team followed the same process of measuring airflow and enthalpy change across the system to determine the delivered Btus from the cooling system into the conditioned space. This time, the results weren’t as flattering.

Instead of delivering close to four tons of cooling into the comfort advisor’s home, it only delivered around 2.75 tons. This system was only operating at 66% of the laboratory-rated capacity. The craftsmanship receipt revealed a system that failed to deliver what was sold.

The measurements of these systems were proof of their design and workmanship. One system passed with flying colors. The results on the company’s installation were proof that everything came together to achieve a great HVAC system. However, the other system failed to deliver.

THE RESULTS OF YOUR PRODUCT

If you or someone else were to test your work and provide a craftsmanship receipt, what would it show? Would it prove your work resulted in what you promised, or would it tell another story?

Our industry must be about far more than dealers peddling equipment for the lowest price. We affect the quality of people’s lives. Don’t forget that your work makes a difference. If you’re tired of looking and sounding like everyone else, it might be time for you to provide proof of your work.

Your customers need to know if there is a way for them to receive proof that what they paid for is what you delivered.

You can prove your installations are better through measurements. Unless you measure, you can’t provide a craftsmanship receipt, and you’re stuck playing the same low-bid game that everyone else is struggling to win.

It’s time for our industry to change the game the same way that John Patterson did.

He focused on the results of his product, not the product itself. So ask yourself this: Why not focus on your strengths and offer proof of the results to your customers? 



David Richardson serves the HVAC industry as vice president of training for National Comfort Institute, Inc. (NCI). He joined NCI in 2010 as a curriculum developer and instructor. David

has been involved in the High-Performance HVAC Industry since 2001, and holds all NCI certifications as well as other industry certifications from HERS, BPI and others. You can contact David at ncilink.com/ContactMe.



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Go to NCIlink.com/TIPP for more information

NCI Welcomes New Members



Membership in an organization like [National Comfort Institute \(NCI\)](#) is a step toward becoming a High-Performance HVAC™ Contracting firm. It is a commitment that has an extraordinary impact on your business and your team.

One of the best [perks of membership](#) is access to all the other NCI members and their vast array of experience and knowledge.

And they are happy to share. NCI membership is like being in a family.

With that in mind, it is our pleasure to recognize and welcome the newest members who recently joined our ranks:

- **Airflow Technologies**, Hartselle, AL
- **Dynamic Balancing Services**, Red Bank, NJ
- **JW East Mechanical Inc.**, Houston, TX
- **LBA Services**, Mission, KS
- **Mission Critical Comfort Solutions**, Kathleen, GA
- **Mountain Energy**, New Richmond, WI
- **Performance Climate Systems**, dba Belton Air Conditioning, Belton, TX
- **Stay Cool With Rob**, Charlotte, NC
- **The Otter Guys**, Charlottesville, VA
- **Tru Service A/C & Heating**, Bryan, TX.

We look forward to hearing from each

of these companies. Please look for regular member benefits updates here.

Interested in becoming a member? Excellent. Just call our Customer Care line at **800-633-7058** and find out how to make that happen.

NCI Instructor Highlight: David Richardson

David joined the National Comfort Institute full time in 2010 as a curriculum developer and trainer. In this role, he developed and taught practical, real-world training focused on the HVAC and Home Performance industries.

He has been involved in High-Performance HVAC™ contracting since 2001 while working in his family's contracting business.



He'll tell you that his introduction to High-Performance HVAC was not easy, but the careful mentoring provided by the late NCI President Rob

Falke and the subsequent experience allowed him the opportunity to diagnose and correct many HVAC and home performance issues. Nine years later he brought his talents and skills to NCI.

Today David is vice president of training. He took over many of the responsibilities of managing the curriculum side of NCI's business [after the passing of Rob Falke](#).

In addition, David writes monthly columns for other industry publications to help increase awareness on the importance of high-performance testing.

David is also a regular presenter at many industry conferences, including the HVAC Symposium, AHR Exposition, and

[NCI's High-Performance HVAC Summit](#), working to spread the message of high-performance contracting.

Besides holding all NCI certifications, he has held certifications as a HERS rater, BPI building analyst, and is a BPI field and written exam proctor.

Stay Tuned for NCI Podcasts

Do you do podcasts? Great news! NCI is entering the podcast realm to bring you all the latest in High-Performance HVAC. Under this magazine's umbrella, the High-Performance HVAC Podcast will soon be available via all your favorite podcast sources.

Starting with presentations that NCI did at AHR Expo in Orlando this past February, you'll find:

- HVAC Diagnostic Workflows and Training Paths
- Navigating High-Performance Heat Pump Retrofits
- Basic and Advanced HVAC Industry Training
- You Are The Brand
- Transition to A2L and Beyond.



Keep your eyes, and your ears, peeled for this exciting new podcast series from NCI! We've got a lot of great features and surprises in store.

More to come soon! 



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Why and How to Become a Certified Duct Surgeon™



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

Last month I shared some thoughts on how to get on the [Path to High-Performance HVAC™](#). A growing group of contractors across North America are on this continuous improvement path to delivering measured, verified, proven performance in the systems they install and service.

Part of this journey includes optimizing air distribution systems — a major key to improving performance. Professionals who get trained and certified soon learn that they rarely need to tear out all the ducts and start over.

They learn through testing they can often surgically repair systems with amazing results. NCI recently coined a phrase that refers to these professionals as **Duct Surgeons™**

A MEDICAL ANALOGY

Many decades ago NCI started teaching the analogy between static pressure and blood pressure, comparing the two, even showing equivalency charts between the effects of high blood pressure in humans and potential dangers and effects of high static pressure on an HVAC system.

Over the years we expanded this analogy to include several vital signs taken by doctors and nurses like temperature, weight, etc.

We came up with these comparisons to make it easier for contractors to explain issues to homeowners in laymen terms. This airflow approach helps customers understand the benefits of having their systems tested correctly and

surgically optimized to solve issues and improve performance.

Better performance typically increases the safety, health, comfort, and energy efficiency of the HVAC system, the home, and its occupants. This is a true win-win for both your customers and your company, and sets you apart in your market.

The path to becoming a **Duct Surgeon** and over time, a TOTAL High-Performance HVAC™ professional who measures, balances, and verifies delivered Btus to every area of the house is not easy but also not complicated.

It does take some investment, hard work, and a willingness to do things differently.

Ready to get started? There are several steps. Try to follow them in order. This will drastically reduce your learning curve.

STEP 1 – AIR TESTING AND UPGRADES

If you are not already on this path, the easiest way to get started

is to attend a live online NCI [Airflow Testing and Diagnostics class](#).

This class is currently held every other month and is broken into two, four-hour sessions over two days.

In this training you will learn

how to measure static pressures and airflows based on NCI's diagnostic workflows. You will then be able to prescribe solutions to insure the equipment operates within factory pressure, airflow, and system capacity specifications.

[Click here to continue on page 26](#)





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Certified Duct Surgeon™

(continued from page 23)

STEP 2 – THE SURGICAL APPROACH

After applying the above testing methods and successfully improving systems with [NCI's Air Upgrade™ approach](#), you will be ready to move up to [Duct System Optimization](#). It's through this step that your field people truly begin to become Duct Surgeons.

The training methodically walks you through how to test, diagnose, and identify duct deficiencies that impact performance.

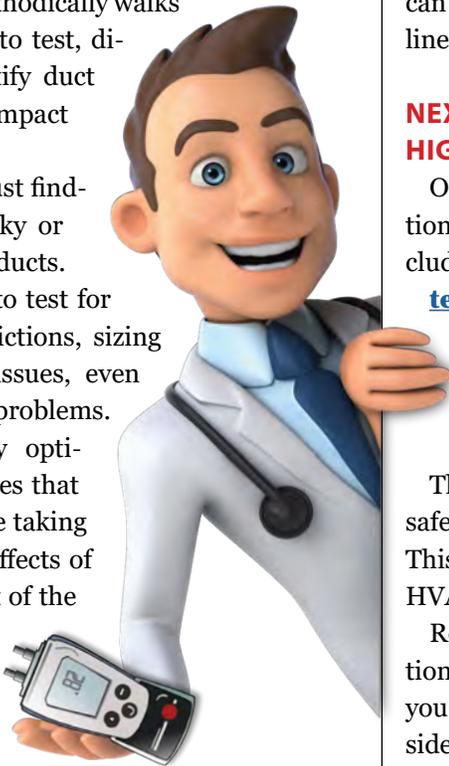
It's more than just finding and fixing leaky or poorly insulated ducts. It's learning how to test for and identify restrictions, sizing issues, filtration issues, even grille and register problems.

You then apply optimization techniques that fix the issues while taking into account the effects of repairs on the rest of the system.

Here's just one simple example: Through testing you identify a restricted, undersized return.

Once you fix that issue, the increased return airflow might cause the supply static pressure to increase, thus actually reducing airflow, or with a constant torque motor, send Watt draw through the roof, causing air noise issues, etc.

Without proper testing techniques, and applying pressure budgets you could miss this consequence after you sold the job. There is nothing worse than having to go back and fix it again –



typically at your cost. It's hard to tell your customer you goofed and that will cost them more.

There are many similar situations that can be avoided when you understand how repairs can cause unintended consequences if the system is not looked at in its entirety. That's why the right training and the right tools are so important. You can't shortcut this learning by watching a few on-line videos.

NEXT STEPS TO HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC

Once you've mastered Duct System Optimization you can move up to higher disciplines including [Air Balancing](#), and [Residential System Performance](#). This training ties the equipment and duct system performance together so you can deliver the right amount of proven, verified Btus to every register and room in a home.

These improvements can help keep a home safe, healthy, comfortable, and energy efficient. This is the true definition of a High-Performance HVAC System.

Remember, it's the journey, not the destination. Once you start to look at systems differently, you will want to more deeply explore the "load" side of the system. This includes HVAC design and a better understanding of building construction elements.

Your path will also lead to house sealing and insulation to help improve overall performance and system sizing. It doesn't mean you have to do that part yourself, unless you want to. There are plenty of ways to partner with companies that specialize in that.

The key to not getting overwhelmed is taking one baby step at a time. Build on your knowledge, and you will become unstoppable! 



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



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UPCOMING NCI TRAINING: MAY - AUGUST 2025

PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING

Duct System Optimization and Residential Air Balancing

May 6-8: Tukwila, WA
May 13-15: Eagan, MN
May 13-15: Tampa, FL
June 10-12: Billings, MT
August 26-28: Denver, CO

Airflow Testing & Diagnostics

May 13: Johnstown, CO

Refrigerant-Side Performance

May 14-15: Johnstown, CO

Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing

May 13-15: Lakewood, NJ
May 20-22: Dayton, OH
August 12-14: Lewisville, TX
August 19-21: Mentor, OH

Duct System Optimization

May 28-29: Morristown, TN

Combustion Performance and Carbon Monoxide Safety

August 12-14: Grand Rapids, MI
August 26-28: Livonia, MI

PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING (cont.)

Commercial Air Balancing

August 19-21: Glen Burnie, MD

PUBLIC ONLINE LIVE TRAINING

Commercial Air-side Recertification - ONLINE LIVE

May 6-7

Airflow Testing and Diagnostics - ONLINE LIVE

May 13-14

Duct System Optimization - ONLINE LIVE

Part 1: June 3-4 • Part 2: June 10-11

Residential HVAC System Performance - ONLINE LIVE

June 17-18: Part 1
June 24-25: Part 2

Commercial HVAC System Performance - ONLINE LIVE

July 1-2: Part 1
July 8-9: Part 2

PUBLIC ONLINE LIVE TRAINING (cont.)

Combustion Performance & Carbon Monoxide Safety Recertification - ONLINE LIVE

August 5-6

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Airflow Testing & Diagnostics

May 13: Anaheim, CA
May 20: Tulare, CA

Refrigerant-Side Performance

May 14-15: Anaheim, CA
May 21-22: Tulare, CA

Residential HVAC System Performance and Air Balancing

May 28-30: Anaheim, CA

Commercial Air Balancing

June 10-12: Anaheim, CA

Test and Certify Ventilation Systems and Economizers

June 24-25: Anaheim, CA



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