

# HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC TODAY™

*If You Don't Measure, You're Just Guessing!™*

John Garofalo



Laura DiFlippo



High-Performance HVAC

# industry influencers

Scott Johnson



Nita Brooks



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Create Static Pressure Testing Best Practices
- The HVAC Industry Loses Another Great Leader
- Contractor Spotlight: SoCal Airflow Pros

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# HIGH-PERFORMANCE HVAC TODAY™

COVER STORY:

## 10 Class of 2022 High-Performance HVAC Industry Influencers

Meet the four newest inductees to *High-Performance HVAC Today's* Industry Influencers Club.



MANAGEMENT:

### Create Static Pressure Testing Best Practices

Contractor Ben DiMarco of Cleveland, OH-based DiMarco and Associates shares some of the best practices he's incorporated into his company.



TRIBUTE:

### The HVAC Industry Loses Another Great Leader

NCI CEO Dominick Guarino shares his thoughts and memories on the late NCI President, Rob Falke.

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# Influencing a Generation: A Personal Tribute



**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).

I am just going to say it: I am a Baby Boomer. You can safely say that the Boomer Generation contributed some of the most amazing advances to humanity.

The word “influencers” has a different meaning today. Before it became synonymous with social media, it was about people who focused on making a positive change in the world in a way that would inspire others.

I want to talk about those kinds of influencers: people who I consider heroes.

For example, anyone who knows me knows what a geek I am concerning computers and computing technology. Without a doubt, in that field, my biggest heroes are Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Steve Wozniak. They turned the world upside down when they brought affordable computing technology to the masses.

HVAC and beyond.

**Joe Fristik** was the publisher of *Contracting Business* magazine when the publishing industry was undergoing tremendous changes. The challenges of being a print publication converting to digital technologies were complex. He was never afraid of tackling problems, but always approached them with finesse and grace. He was a master relationship builder -- a skill that benefited not only the magazine but also the industry.

**Rob Falke** was the president of National Comfort Institute who passed away on May 3, 2022. Please read Dominick Guarino’s tribute to Rob on page 19. Everyone who knew Rob knows the tremendous contributions and leadership he shared with the HVAC Industry. Without his guidance and insight, the concepts of High-Performance HVAC contracting would not be what they are today.

Rob’s gentle inquisitiveness and wisdom helped me understand the technology and importance of testing and measuring HVAC system performance. He and I spent

BEFORE IT BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, “INFLUENCERS” WERE PEOPLE WHO MADE POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE WORLD AND INSPIRED OTHERS.

hours talking about the industry, ASHRAE 221, and, of all things, religion! We both shared many insights into our beliefs, and Rob taught me how to look for commonalities instead of differences – something that I hope translates across all my interactions with anyone I encounter.

And then there are the professional influencers who impact the entire HVAC Industry as well as me. Three gentlemen come to mind immediately: Jim Norris, Joe Fristik, Rob Falke.

**Jim Norris** was the executive vice president of the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) from 1969 to 1997. In my lifetime, he was the leader who took ACCA to the next level. He helped grow it into one of the largest and most contractor-focused organizations in the HVAC Industry. His insights and vision helped not only this industry, but me as a young reporter and editor. I interviewed him countless times and over the years, we became friends. He helped change how I viewed my job and my relationships in

In addition to these gentlemen, I’d also like to point out four other individuals who greatly impacted the High-Performance HVAC Industry. They certainly contributed to changes in how the overall HVAC Industry looks at performance from a testing and measuring standpoint. Read about them on page 10 in the article, *Class of 2022 High-Performance HVAC Industry Influencers*. 

## TSI/Alnor Velocity Matrix

The TSI/Alnor 801090 velocity matrix can increase your testing speed and accuracy. It's a device with many uses that you can quickly adapt to your testing workflows.

This accessory uses the same grid found at the bottom of TSI/Alnor air balancing hoods. However, you can attach it to the included telescopic pole with extra-long hoses for various applications.

It is ideal when measuring difficult access areas like economizers, kitchen hoods, or grilles that are inaccessible with an air balancing hood. The TSI/Alnor 801090 velocity matrix includes different length stand-off feet to maintain a consistent distance from the



surface you measure.

You can connect the EBT730 micromanometer from the air balancing hood to the TSI/Alnor 801090 velocity matrix and program it to display cfm (cubic feet per

minute) on the screen. This feature saves you time on math calculations and increases your accuracy. The device averages multiple air velocity measurements from a one square foot area and has an air velocity range from 25 to 2500 fpm (feet per minute).

The velocity matrix has only one downside. It isn't the best tool to use on windy days for those who measure economizer airflow. Since the test ports are open with no protection, significant fluctuations in your velocity measurements could occur. However, when used to measure open-area airflow, it works well.

For more information or to purchase the 801090 Velocity Matrix, visit the NCI store here: [ncilink.com/VelocityMatrix](http://ncilink.com/VelocityMatrix).

– By David Richardson, National Comfort Institute 

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# SoCal Airflow Pros: Take the Gamble Out of High-Performance

Not every contractor's beginning story is the same, but history begins at a casino when it comes to this High-Performance HVAC company.

First, some background: A young military veteran named Cody Novini



Cody Novini

worked as a field technician for a large HVAC company in Orange County, CA, when his wife gave birth to their third child.

He took a month off for paternity leave to help his family settle in with their latest addition. Paternity leave comes with a government stipend in California, and Novini received \$3,500. That \$3,500 earned him \$4,000 very quickly.

"It was such a sweet feeling," Novini explains. "We had so much fun. I was an air conditioning tech by day and a card-counting blackjack gambler by night. I'd go to the casinos a few times each week and made a lot of money."

Unfortunately, he grew unhappy with the HVAC company he worked for, and he decided it made a lot of sense to spend more time with his family. Novini says between the money he had earned as a selling technician and the money won at the casino, he could leave his current employment. It was

all about a lifestyle change.

The good news is that many of his friends, family, and neighbors still wanted him to service their air conditioning equipment.

Novini says, "I began doing work here and there and enjoyed myself. Then my customers began sending referrals, and I had more work than I could handle. So I decided to get an HVAC contractor license and see how things went."

## DOING THINGS RIGHT

"Starting my own HVAC business just fell in my lap. That was in 2015, and I formally established my company right after that."

**SoCal Airflow Pros** was born. The company is in Rancho Santa Margarita (or RSM as locals refer to it), along the foothills of the Saddleback Mountains. RSM is a suburb of Orange County, CA, and wherever you are in the town, you have spectacular views of the mountains beyond.

According to Novini, who served five years in the United States Marine Corps, his company focuses on residential HVAC work though they handle a small amount of commercial. He says the most important thing for him personally is to do things right for the customers. He says that approach pays off.

"I live in a community that heavily



Training is a cornerstone to SoCal Airflow Pro's high-performance HVAC approach to contracting.



supports veterans,” he explains. “As a veteran doing heating and air conditioning, I got a lot of work.”

Two years ago, Novini says the company grossed around \$4.4 million in revenue and then grew by 50% during the height of the pandemic last year to \$6.6 million.

“Right now,” he adds, “we’re on pace for \$12 million. We operate in Orange County, and that is an extremely hot market. Intelligent people have told me it’s one of the biggest HVAC residential marketplaces in the country.”

As he says, by doing things right, he managed to grow his one-person business in just seven years into a company with 36 total employees and fields 25 service and installation vehicles.

### AIRFLOW IS KING

Even in Novini’s early days as a tech working for another company, he knew the key to making customers happy was finding ways to perfect airflow

through a system and understand its impact on the refrigerant.

“Airflow is the most important part of a heating and air conditioning system, and that is why our name is Airflow Pros.”

He learned a lot about the importance of ductwork at the company he used to work for and says that is why he focuses on ductwork.

“From early on in my career as a

### IF YOU DON’T MEASURE, YOU’RE JUST GUESSING

Novini says you have to know how to test it, measure it, and diagnose any issues to achieve proper airflow.

“You can’t do that unless you are properly trained,” he continues.

In that light, every October, he sends 100% of the field staff to training at the [National Comfort Institute \(NCI\) Los Alamitos training center](#).

“We shut the company down for three days, which isn’t fun on the books but is a fantastic investment in our team,” he explains. “I believe NCI is all about how to perfect airflow. I also believe in the technical training from other organizations like the Air Conditioning Contractors

of America (ACCA), Heat Exchanger Experts, Inc., Service Nation Alliance, EGIA, and others.

“Plus, three days a week we train our service guys in the technical and communication aspects of HVAC. We teach communication because consumers, especially heating and air



service technician, I understood that static pressure is the key to getting these systems to work right, achieve proper flow, and make every room comfortable per customers’ wishes.

“So, when I struck out on my own, it was important that airflow was part of my company’s name.”

conditioning customers, face a lot of scammers. As a legit business, you must be able to communicate well enough to prove to clients that you're not one of those crooks. And frankly, it's not that easy to do."

He says because HVAC work is technical work, technicians must be able to explain things in layman's terms to be clear to homeowners.

"But then I also need training. I certainly don't have all the answers," Novini says. "So, I participate in something called [MAP Management Program](#). They are a consulting group that helps business leaders learn their weaknesses, how to fix them, and how to improve the other vital factors of management.

"Because MAP's Newport location is near us, we've sent our entire leadership team through their program. They even come to our office and do a monthly Vital Factor Meeting. This helps us set up accountability, create efficient, productive meetings, and more," says Novini.

**BOOK CLUBS WORK**

Novini adds that he is a big believer in reading and continuously learning. He says that each day begins for him around 5:00 AM. As he preps for the day, he reads or listens to books. He calls this being "focused on working on his brain."

He adds that he encourages his management team to do this as well.

"I have a book list for my team that they all can access. They just need the Audible app, and they can listen to books while they're driving between service calls, on their way into the office in the morning, or on their way home."



SoCal Airflow Pros is owned by Cody Novini, a retired U.S. Marine, and serves a community dedicated to supporting veterans.

Interestingly enough, he even has a program where after a member of his team completes a book, if they write a report based on some criteria he sets up, then answer a set of questions based on the books, SoCal Airflow Pros pays them \$500 per book!

"After our daily meetings, the management team and I have a book club meeting. We're currently listening to [The E-Myth HVAC Contractor](#) by Michael Gerber and Ken Goodrich. We discuss each chapter as we complete them."

He has a similar setup for his field technicians as well.

Again, Novini emphasizes reading to keep his people learning and growing, which directly benefits their focus and success in the field.

**SYSTEM RENOVATIONS AND AIR UPGRADES**

"We work hard to be freaking good at heating and air conditioning," he says. "I believe we provide customers with the best installations they can get in our market area. And we face a lot of big competition. For us, installation is the key to our success."

Novini adds that his technicians have each other's backs. "This way, we rarely miss anything. For example, if the installers show up and find the sales guy did 98% of his job and missed a couple of things, the installation crew will make sure everything else is dialed-in perfectly.

"By testing and measuring, we can offer customers options to best correct their comfort and energy issues. We look at ways to reduce heat gain – whether it's using solar, replacing windows, and so on."

He says his installers have a lot of pride in doing quality work. Half of the installation team has a military background, which creates a sense of brotherhood and camaraderie, in Novini's words.

"They hold each other accountable to a higher standard," he says. "They also help train new techs and mold them into forward-thinking, mature, ambitious people who want more training and want to do better."

When it comes to sales, Novini wants salespeople who have a retail mindset when it comes to duct renovations and air upgrade sales. He



says they need to understand the technology, be able to take measurements and tests, and then be able to interpret the data so that customers can make intelligent buying decisions. He wants salespeople interested in building relationships to listen to customers and solve their problems.

“Our salespeople like this approach because of our technical strategy, and they enjoy coming to a customer with facts. Because of their training, they know how to communicate with homeowners, and they can sell more successfully as a result.

“Part of this is to help clients understand by educating them. Selling high-performance HVAC systems can be an uphill battle if we can’t do this. So communication is a big deal.”

**HIGH-PERFORMANCE IS NOT A GAMBLE**

“NCI’s high-performance contracting approach is all we do. Testing, measuring, and diagnosing airflow, static pressure, and other readings change you from being a contractor who just guesses into a true professional,” Novini adds.

“There is no gamble to this approach. It is tried and true. It builds confidence in your team and helps them have confidence in their abilities. They know that what they are doing is 100% accurate and correct. They aren’t guessing or telling themselves they are only doing it because the boss is telling them to.”

In the end, he says his philosophy is that no matter where you are in your career – a tech fresh out of school or a

grizzled veteran -- you need always to be a student.

“You should always be willing to learn. You will be learning until the day you die, or the industry will surpass you.”

SoCal Airflow Pros was, according to Cody Novini, founded on a simple principle: “provide the service we would like provided for ourselves. SoCal Airflow Pros continues to prove that world-class customer service, workmanship, and integrity are truly the best recipes for success.”

For these and many other reasons, **High-Performance HVAC Today** magazine chose **SoCal Airflow Pros** as this month’s *Contractor Spotlight*. Congratulations to Cody and the entire team. NCI



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# Class of 2022 High-Performance HVAC Industry Influencers

**E**very industry is served by people who significantly impact it — whether from the invention of technology or processes, or sales and/or marketing techniques. Because of their experience, knowledge, position in that industry, and relationship with others, these are people who impact its development. They make a difference in the industry’s direction and its future. The high-performance segment of the HVAC industry is no different.

These influential people are not only members of the High-Performance HVAC Contracting community, but they work to help others be more successful. In fact, their actions contribute to the High-Performance HVAC Industry’s growth and acceptance throughout the greater HVAC Industry and among consumers.

Influencers believe in education and training and continually seek better ways of doing things. They lead by example. They take what they learn and implement it successfully into their businesses, then take the time to share what they learn during that process with others.

How did they make our list? Over the years, members of the NCI team have traveled the country, visiting and working with many contracting firms, manufacturers, distributors, utilities, and trade associations. They worked together on evolving beyond selling equipment to an approach where a system is more than a set of boxes.

The NCI team met people who believed in the tenets of testing duct systems, equipment, and even the overall building itself. They measure airflow, temperature, and more, then calculate their impact on delivered comfort and energy efficiency.

The following four are the 2022 “influencer inductees.” We don’t consider the time or era in which they served. We look at what inductee

candidates have done or are doing and the impact of those efforts.

If there is someone you think should be added, let us know who they are and why they are influencers. Send me your “nomination” via email at [ncilink.com/ContactMe](mailto:ncilink.com/ContactMe).

So, without further ado, here is the 2022 class of influencers who directly impacted the High-Performance HVAC Industry.



## SCOTT JOHNSON

One of the strongest proponents for HVAC system testing in California is Scott Johnson. In fact, Scott spent decades working to bring a level of realism to system testing. In the 1990s, he was president of Action Now, located in Costa Mesa, CA, a company that tested thousands of homes during the early years of government-regulated testing. He was on a mission to influence how not only contractors viewed HVAC systems, but how regulators, inspectors, and other entities viewed it as well.

In that effort, over several decades, he served on many government and utility committees, including the California Energy Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission. He was a member of the Institute of Heating & Air Conditioning Industry (IHACI) in California and became its Education and Training Chairman.

IHACI has a longstanding Southern California program that trains more than 5,000 technicians each year. In his position, Scott managed a crew of trainers and spent more than seven years developing the organization’s training curriculum.

In the earlier days of his career, Scott focused on the blower door and duct blaster approach

to testing, but that evolved after becoming active with National Comfort Institute.

He attended one of the first NCI training events in the early 1990s, where he was introduced to testing instruments like balancing hoods and manometers. These tools and the high-performance approach that NCI was teaching showed him that the government and utility side of our industry had a long way to go to accurately rate the performance of homes.

It reinforced his belief that they understood very little about what makes HVAC systems tick.

His influence reached beyond training, however. Scott became involved with the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) and their Quality Installation Standard. Some say that Scott has single-handedly tested more QI systems in Southern California than have been tested across the U.S.

Eventually, Scott joined the NCI team and focused his efforts on training contractors throughout Southern California via NCI's current Los Alamitos and Southern California Edison's Tulare training facilities. Unfortunately, due to serious health problems, Scott has had to step back from active teaching and testing.

For these and many other reasons, Scott Johnson has positively influenced the HVAC Industry in Southern California and beyond.

## LAURA DIFILIPPO

It's a safe bet that anyone who knows anything will tell you that Laura DiFilippo, vice-president of DiFilippo's Service, Paoli, PA, is one of the key influencers who opened the door to leadership for women in the



HVACR Industry.

Laura Howell never had a career in HVAC on her radar as a young woman. She worked as an account administrator for an investment firm and dreamed of a career as a musician and actor. She originally pursued a career in musical theater.

But then she met a young man named Vincent DiFilippo, and everything changed. The two fell in love and were married. She began helping him out in his family HVAC business and made that her career over the years.

Today she is vice president and co-owner of DiFilippo's Service Company. For more than two decades, she's been instrumental in running all the company's operations, including HR, financials, marketing, and supervising the management team.

Vince credits her for much of the company's growth and the recognition it has earned over the years. DiFilippo's Service is an NCI member and a participant in the High-Performance HVAC Contracting approach to serving customers.

But her influence expands well beyond the confines of her family's HVAC business. She has always been the type of person to get involved. This drive led her to join the local chapter of the **Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA)**.

She began attending ACCA's Quality College classes with Vince. Later, they joined a group of fellow ACCA members to counter unfair competitive practices brought upon the HVAC marketplace by local utilities.

Her passion for helping HVAC con-

tractors grew from there. Laura served on the Board of Directors of the Delaware Valley Chapter of ACCA for 14 years, holding all officers' positions, including Chapter President for five years. This involvement led to a path of becoming active with ACCA nationally. She has served as a National ACCA Board Director since 2003.

She is the first woman to serve as an officer of the national association, being Secretary, Treasurer, Senior Vice Chairman, and ultimately Chairman of ACCA for 2012-2013. Her passion for ACCA and the industry is evident in any industry meeting or event she participates in.

If you talk to her, Laura will tell you that such involvement helps not only fellow contractors but also customers. She has been quoted saying that no matter what, HVAC contractors are the front line to consumers and are the critical component of the overall supply chain.

Her industry involvement and influence expanded both within ACCA and out to other organizations – local and national. Some would say Laura DiFilippo opened many doors for other women to become leaders in the industry. It also led to her being named the 2013 Woman of the Year by **Contracting Business** magazine.

In 2016 she became a board member of North American Technician Excellence (NATE). She eventually became the chairman of that organization as well.

## JOHN GAROFALO

John Garofalo spent more than 30 years working in the HVAC industry after serving in the US Navy. His expertise was in business opera-



tions, marketing and advertising, finance and planning, acquisitions, and service. In addition to his years of consulting to the HVAC industry, he demonstrated how to deliver atypically high profitability in various job functions.

He always focused on the importance of leadership, accountability, and implementation, which he learned as a Navy Seal.

How? John taught contractors about how to be Servant Leaders. **Servant Leadership** means having regular benchmarking with up-to-date performance results posted where everyone in the company can see them.

He emphasized the need for strong leadership with humble ethical and business standards. And most importantly, he taught contractors the vital importance of embracing change. He helped contractors to constantly look for and implement ways to improve their teams and processes. He preached high-performance leadership, accountability, and implementation.

John was all about having sincere care for people, “gettin’ er done,” and living with integrity. He always recommended contractors look at the decisions they had to make through the lens of whether “the juice is worth the squeeze.”

He took training to a personal level and mentored thousands of contractors across the country. His teaching centered not only on how to create processes and implement quality into a company, but he also taught many lessons on life and living.

Many contractors say that John’s

mentorship helped their companies thrive, grow, and better serve their HVAC customers.

In 2016, John Garofalo lost his battle with cancer. John invested the last five years of his career as a Business Coach and mentor for many NCI members. NCI created the *John Garofalo Implementation Excellence Award* to honor his legacy and positive influence on the High-Performance HVAC Industry. This award is presented to a contractor who regularly delivers measured performance in every aspect of their business. It is presented annually during NCI’s High-Performance HVAC Summit conference.

#### NITA BROOKS



Though her early background was outside the HVAC Industry, it focused on the administration, development, and support of business processes in the manufacturing arena. Her goals were to accurately report company profitability while promoting business practices.

She brought those skill sets to the HVAC Industry in 2000 when Nita joined Contractor’s Success Group – an organization dedicated to improving the business practices of heating and air conditioning contractors across North America.

That business went through a few owners and name changes, but Nita was one of the constants.

One of that group’s name changes was International Service Leadership (ISL), which became part of the National Comfort Institute family in 2008. ISL’s team became NCI’s busi-

ness development division. Her work evolved to creating tools and programs for High-Performance HVAC contractors across the country to help them improve and implement better processes to keep their businesses successful.

During her career with NCI, Nita embraced many roles: Preferred Vendor Program Manager, Business Coach, Course Instructor, Business Curriculum Development, and Business Product Development.

Over time, Nita developed educational webinars, wrote articles, and blog posts. She worked tirelessly with the rest of the team at NCI to create tools to continue helping contractors evolve and grow in terms of professionalism, craftsmanship, and the delivery of High-Performance Contracting techniques to members.

She was one of the early members of **Women in HVACR**, an organization to help attract and advance more women to the HVACR trades. She became a board member of that national organization and then became its president in 2011. She actively served her term and then as a member of their advisory board until her passing in 2017.

Her influence is still felt through the webinars and other training tools she developed and are still used in the HVAC Industry today.



**Mike Weil** is the Director of Communications for National Comfort Institute, Inc. (NCI). He also serves as editor-in-chief of **High-Performance HVAC Today** magazine, the only trade publication that targets the

High-Performance HVAC Contracting community. He can be reached via NCI’s contact page at [ncilink.com/ContactMe](https://ncilink.com/ContactMe).

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# Create Static Pressure Testing Best Practices

**I**n High-Performance HVAC Contracting, creating processes that follow best practices is simply the best way to work and be successful.

From a construction standpoint, you wouldn't dream of doing a large HVAC system installation without having a set of blueprints for the home or building. The good thing is that the "blueprint is already created," thanks to the research and study done by National Comfort Institute (NCI) over the years.

These blueprints will standardize your approach, create better opportunities to solve customer problems, and help make your business some money.

But one company's approach to best practices won't always work for another. You have to make processes and practices that work for your company, co-workers, and customers.

At [DiMarco and Associates](#), High-Performance HVAC contracting always starts and ends with training. I'm not only talking about technical training, there is much more to it than that.

## WHO ARE DIMARCO AND ASSOCIATES?

It makes sense to know a little about us to understand our best practices. Located on the east side of Cleveland, OH, DiMarco and Associates is a commercial and residential HVAC company that focuses primarily on service and replacement work. The company offers a wide variety of services and disciplines to help customers be safe, comfortable, and healthy in both their commercial and residential environments. One of our secrets to success is being diversified – not all our eggs are in one nest.

We perform service, installations, some new construction, retrofit, Design/Build, and system optimization and retro-commissioning. And we

do this with just 28 employees.

Being diverse is a huge saving grace, especially in these times. To do this requires a culture of learning and training. That is where we saw the advantages of approaching our work as High-Performance HVAC contractors. We added technical training from National Comfort Institute more than 10 years ago and became members of that organization in 2013.

Read more about our history at [ncilink.com/DASpotlight](http://ncilink.com/DASpotlight).

My vice president, Henry Sterling, and I are very deep into implementing performance into every aspect of what we do. We both have taken classes and are certified in several disciplines. We took what we learned and now teach these disciplines to our technicians. Several of our top technicians are also trained and certified to teach our younger guys airflow diagnostics and combustion analysis.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR STATIC PRESSURE

Over the years, static pressure testing has become the basis of how we do preventive maintenance and service. In fact, static pressure is integral to our contracts.

Static pressure testing is supposed to be on every service call. It is part of our residential service checklist whenever we're out on a diagnostic call. We make exceptions, especially during summer when we face unending no-cooling calls. We consider those calls emergencies and try to get the HVAC system working as quickly as possible.

On commercial jobs, we do static pressure testing or conduct a duct traverse to make sure economizers are set up correctly.

Training for commissioning is an ongoing process for us. We make sure to do static pressure

testing as part of every installation start up. This is our commissioning process which we do on both residential and commercial jobs.

The takeaway is that we always emphasize testing and balancing (TAB). Some TAB is embedded in the general work we do and some is part of our duct renovation work. We average around \$500,000 a year in commissioning work.

### GOOD COMMUNICATION IS VITAL

One of the best practices is the ability to communicate to customers in a way that educates them so they can make the right purchase decisions. Communication starts with testing and measuring, then being able to interpret the results, so customers know what you are talking about.

The NCI mantra, “If You Don’t Measure, You’re Just Guessing™,” is the basis of our communications. For those of us who do measure, this is a tremendous opportunity.

And it’s not all technical. You have to be able to walk customers through the process to help them buy. This means being more consultative.

In other words, static pressure testing and airflow issues themselves are just part of the puzzle in discussing issues with the customer. How do you explain and advise them on optimizing or retro-commissioning their system? Most customers have no idea what any of this means.

For example, you can say, *Mrs. Jones, we just finished testing and measuring your system and found that you have a great base. The only issue is that all the different parts aren’t dialed in correctly. Your heating and air conditioning equipment is*

*built to produce 30 miles per gallon, but you are only getting 18. So here are a few things we recommend you do to go from 18 to 26 mph.*

*You can get better energy efficiency, better comfort throughout your home, better indoor air quality, and fewer breakdowns.*

### SHOWROOM MARKETING

Part of communications is doing what I call *show-and-tell*. In addition to explaining things in laymen’s terms, having a way to physically show customers what we mean is even better.

So we are renovating and changing our laboratory showroom. We have working systems that we can show customers. Our guys can train on this same equipment, plus this is the equipment that heats and cools our buildings. This showroom laboratory is like a car dealership. It lets customers see what we are talking about.

### CHEERLEADERS ARE REQUIRED

One of the best practices we use at DiMarco and Associates is having dedicated cheerleaders. Cheerleaders help inspire and drive the team toward High-Performance HVAC contracting success. They help remind technicians about the importance of taking the time to test and measure, balance systems, and present the facts to customers in ways they will easily understand.

And cheerleaders help keep the message consistent. Cheerleaders don’t have to be management (though our two cheerleaders are). And this works.

Twenty years ago, when I first started on the path to performance, the HVAC Industry was so different than it is now. Today the industry recognizes the

importance of testing and measuring, and more people are aware of high performance than ever. People talk about the importance of proper airflow today, whereas 20 years ago, that wasn’t even part of the conversation.

And NCI is the driving force behind this. Talk about cheerleaders!

In summary, here are some best practices that can help you be consistent in your static pressure testing and how you report results to customers:

- The more static pressure testing you do, the more you will help increase awareness of what it is and what it means to consumers
- It would be best if you had a cheerleader or two
- Explain to customers how static pressure testing makes air visible, and why that is important
- Educate customers how their HVAC system impacts their lives. Talk about how indoor air quality and airflow make all the difference
- Static pressure testing is a discipline. It is one of the essential skill-sets your technicians need.

In the end, we want to use our testing and measurements to help advise customers on the best way to solve their comfort and efficiency problems. Being comfort advisors is what all the best practices we talked about here lead to – that and satisfied customers. 



**Ben DiMarco** is the CEO of DiMarco and Associates. He’s served in the HVAC Industry since 1986 and is a proponent of both the high-performance and Design/Build methods of doing business. You

can contact him at [ncilink.com/Contactme](https://ncilink.com/Contactme).

## Welcome New NCI Partners

National Comfort Institute is pleased to welcome two new partners to our Member Rewards Training Incentive Partner Program (TIPP). They are Mosaic and Service First.



**Mosaic** is a financing company that specializes in home improvement companies, including HVAC contracting firms. Their modus operandi is to make it easier for consumers to do business with your company by bringing costly improvements like replacement HVAC equipment, air upgrades, and duct renovations down to affordable monthly payments.

The cool thing is that you can close and manage any sales deal on any device. They offer near-instant pre-approval decision, an interactive payment estimator, both next day and staged funding, and more.

Learn more about our new partner and see how you can start earning NCI Bucks right away. Go to <http://ncilink.com/Mosaic> and sign up today.

**Service First** is an electronic payment processing company that is offering a



special "members-only" program. This includes a 60-day trial period, a free equipment loaner program, free enhanced online reporting, and more.

They say they help merchants like you navigate the constantly changing

landscape of the credit card industry while keeping your costs low. Plus it is simple to run transactions.

If interested in exploring ways to not only lower your credit card processing costs, but also earn NCI Bucks, go to their partner page at <http://ncilink.com/SF>.

To sign up with them and get credit for NCI Bucks, go to <http://ncilink.com/SFSignUp>.

## Welcome New Members

National Comfort Institute is a membership organization with the goal of helping HVAC contractors onto the High-Performance HVAC path. People who join are committed to the testing, measuring, and diagnosing approach to



solving customer comfort and energy issues in their homes and businesses.

This commitment has an extraordinary impact on your business, your team, and your customers.

It is our great pleasure to welcome the following companies to who have recently joined the our ranks:

- **Air Butler Heating And Cooling, LLC**, Deaver, WY
- **Air Doctors Heating and Cooling LLC**, South Field, MI
- **Clear Heating & Air Inc.**, El Cajon, CA
- **Energy Management and Commissioning, LLC**, Bay St. Louis, MS
- **Reliance Energy Services**, Riverside, CA
- **The Maintenance Department**, Louisville, KY.

We look forward to working with each of you.



## Did You Know ...

NCI's Member Reward Program can really help when it comes to offsetting your company's training costs. By taking advantage of the services offered by our Training Incentive Partnership Program (TIPP) members earn bucks that are held for them to use to offset training costs.

TIPP was introduced 10 years ago and has been well-received and well-used by many NCI members. This is the only program of its kind in the HVAC Industry.

Last year, 170 NCI members earned a total of \$420,000 in NCI Bucks with 80 of them earning \$377,000 in training funds – an average of more than \$4,700 per company!

The top three earners of 2021 are:

- All-Pro Plumbing (\$34,103)
- Viccarone Heating and Air Conditioning (\$25,666)
- Comfort Master Heating and Cooling (\$20,017).

**The question is ... are YOU taking advantage of this member benefit?**

The key difference between the NCI program is that other programs typically just offer cash rebates. The biggest benefit is that you can use NCI Bucks to reduce your training costs and keep your team on the cutting edge.

[Click here](#) to learn more about NCI Bucks and how they work.

If you have any questions, contact NCI Customer Care at 800-633-6017.

# Don't Just Promise Performance, Prove It!™



The National Comfort Institute (NCI) Certified System Performance program is the first in the HVAC industry that allows contractors to document real system performance and get third party certification on their installations and system renovations.

System certification lets you promise a highly-performing system – and prove it to your customers!



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# The HVAC Industry Loses Another Great Leader

**O**n May 3, 2022, Gregory Robert (Rob) Falke was taken up to his creator. On this sad day, the HVAC industry lost one of its brightest stars and most faithful servant leaders.

Those who were fortunate enough to become one of Rob's many friends knew that he wasn't just an industry icon and thought leader. He genuinely cared about everyone whose life he touched. He made you feel like the most important person in the world when he was with you.

In this tribute, I'd like to share with you who Rob really was, and how he grew up with the HVAC industry over the past 30+ years while helping thousands of others grow with him.



NCI Founders Rob Falke (left) and Dominick Guarino

## THE EARLY DAYS

Rob started his working career in real estate in Central California. During the mid-seventies and early-eighties he grew from a successful realtor to managing an office of 50 agents.

He lived through the boom and bust, experiencing both the glee and agony of that era.

In 1983, his dad Walter, who had been an HVAC technician for many years, had the opportunity to buy a small HVAC service company in Turlock, CA. It was called Saunders Air Conditioning and it served the commercial and residential markets. Since Rob had significant experience in real estate transactions, he helped his dad negotiate the purchase.

Soon after the acquisition, Walter realized he now had to run a contracting business and had little customer service and sales experience. He

asked Rob if he would come on board to handle those areas.

Rob took to HVAC like a fish to water. Not only did he quickly become an incredibly successful salesperson for the company, he was a sponge for knowledge. He read every industry publication he could get his hands on, and attended every conference and training he could – both local and national.

As he became more involved in commercial HVAC, Rob learned that many office buildings and commercial properties the company serviced had significant comfort issues.

He learned about a device called an *air capture hood*, and he studied everything he could find on measuring airflow. Rob soon purchased his first hood to help correct significant comfort issues in one of their customers' buildings.

I remember Rob telling me the story. He had learned that an air capture hood cost \$2,500. When the customer asked how much it would cost to make his building comfortable. Rob quoted a duct renovation, and then said "for \$2,500 more I will guarantee and prove my work in writing."

He purchased the hood, renovated and balanced the building's HVAC, and started on his journey to becoming one of the world's foremost experts in airflow diagnostics and balancing.

In 1986 Rob became NEBB (National Environmental Balancing Bureau) certified, and started National Balancing Service, an air and hydronic balancing company serving Central California.

## THE BIRTH OF RESIDENTIAL AIR BALANCING

Then Rob did something truly unique. He started applying his commercial balancing knowledge to residential HVAC systems. No one else at

the time had even thought about doing that.

As he tested and fixed more systems, he began to write procedures and processes so he could consistently measure and record his findings. He also wrote processes for his installers to follow as they began replacing and renovating bad duct systems.

During that time Rob began to serve on different association boards and in 1989 he became president of the local Air Conditioning Trade Association (ACTA). He continued to serve his local HVAC community for many years.

I met Rob in the early 1990s. After running sales and installation for a local Cleveland contractor, as chief editor of a national magazine, I started writing articles about the need for getting comfort right and improving air delivery systems. A mutual friend saw how we were on the same path and helped put us together.

We decided to meet and test a home in Sacramento together using state-of-the-art (at the time) instruments. I realized what Rob had been working on exactly matched what I was looking



Rob Falke making a presentation during the 2004 HVAC Comfortech event at America's Center in St. Louis, MO.

for. We spent days and nights comparing notes and brainstorming how this could change the industry.

### NCI IS BORN

Within a few years, we formed the foundation of National Comfort Institute (NCI). Fortunately, I had a significant background both in technical training and writing.

Combined with Rob's work on developing air balancing and diagnostic processes and his desire to teach, we began to write the first NCI class – complete with manuals and overhead transparencies. In 1993 Rob taught NCI's first class in a distributor's training room in southern California.

We were off to the races!

As we began to fine tune the training, adding certification exams and additional courses, NCI started growing into a real company. By the late 1990s we had trained thousands of HVAC professionals in air diagnostic and balancing. In 1998, we incorporated NCI and devoted 100% of our time to the company.

As Chairman & CEO, I dedicated my efforts to growing the company and managing all of its business functions. This allowed Rob as President, to build a world class training team of instructors, while creating and improving curriculum.

### AN INDUSTRY ICON

Over the past three decades, Rob, who started in the industry with no technical background, became the father of modern airflow testing and diagnostics and residential air balancing.

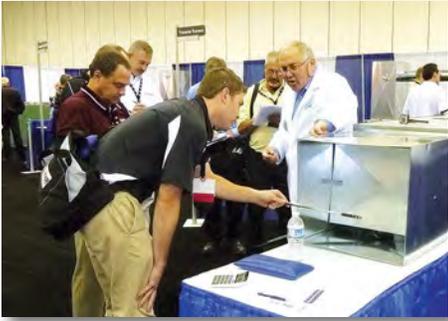
He spent countless hours in pursuit of knowledge. As he learned, he freely shared his knowledge with others.

Together we navigated the negativity of many naysayers who thought we were crazy or just outright wrong. We used to joke with each other that after all, the pioneers were the ones with the most arrows in their backs.

Right up to just days before his



Rob Falke (right) presents David Richardson (left) with NCI's first David Debien Technical Excellence award during Summit 2007 in Charleston, South Carolina. Pictured center left is Dominick Guarino and center right is David Debien's widow, Suzanne Debien.



Rob teaching during a Performance Town event at HVAC Comfortech 2011 in Indianapolis, IN.

passing, Rob and I talked regularly about how we have been so blessed to have a meaningful impact with our work, affecting literally tens of thousands of professionals with our teachings.

The culmination of his work and what would become his final legacy, began in 2016 when Rob convinced ASRHAE (the American Society of Refrigeration, Heating and Air Conditioning Engineers) to let him form and chair a committee to develop a National Standard for measuring the performance of installed HVAC systems.

After four years of painstaking work, in large part due to Rob's leadership, perseverance, and great people skills, in 2020 ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 221: a "[Test Method To Field-Measure And Score The Cooling And Heating Performance Of An Installed Unitary HVAC System](#)," was published. This standard truly embodies Rob's vision of how the industry should test and rate HVAC system performance.

A prolific writer, Rob published hundreds of articles, technical procedures, reports and webinars during his career serving the air conditioning and heating industry. He also has shared his knowledge and insights at dozens of conferences and association meetings including ACCA, AHR,

HVAC Comfortech, IHACI, and NCI's High-Performance HVAC Summit.

### THE REAL DEAL

But Rob was much more than a leader and a visionary in our industry. What made him truly unique is how much he cared about and loved people. Rob had the ability to bring out the best in almost anyone. He could disarm even the most Doubting Thomas with his kindness and caring.

Virtually everyone in our industry who has met Rob has had nothing but praise about how he positively affected their lives.

Just over the past month I personally received hundreds of emails, texts, and phone calls from well-wishers sharing how Rob impacted their lives so profoundly.

Many shared how NCI helped them turn their businesses around, and how Rob was such a major influence in their personal lives as well.

Then there was Rob my best friend and partner in NCI. I feel so blessed by our partnership of nearly 30 years. It's rare that two people can complement each other's strengths and weaknesses,



During High-Performance HVAC Summit 2022, Rob does what he loves -- explaining airflow to contractor attendees during the Performance Town session.



During the High-Performance HVAC Summit in Scottsdale in April 2022, Rob Falke takes a break to pose with Patty and Bill Kennihan of Kennihan Plumbing and Heating, Valencia, PA.

and get along for such a long time. And we liked each other too!

As partners we had a saying we repeated often over the years: "If two people agree on everything, then one of them is not necessary." Whenever we were faced with a tough decision or evaluating an opportunity, we purposely took opposite sides so we could be truly objective.

I think this approach kept us on the right path, and helped us avoid many missteps and mistakes. I couldn't have asked for a better partner.

Rob also left the industry and NCI with a true blessing of hand-picked instructors and many disciples who have made the pursuit of truth and doing the right thing their own missions. His influence will continue on through the thousands he has touched during his brief time on this earth.

I will miss you, Rob. I know this grief will lessen with time and be replaced with so many gifts that you have left me and those close to you, especially the fond memories of our time together.

Rob Falke leaves a legacy within our industry that will endure for many generations to come. He has blessed countless people, including me, and will never be forgotten. Goodspeed my mentor, my brother, my friend. 

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\*NCI training sponsored by TECH Clean California for qualified local contractors.

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July 26-27 & August 2-3

##### Combustion Performance & Carbon Monoxide Safety Recertification Program ONLINE

August 23-24

#### PUBLIC LIVE TRAINING

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

September 7-9: Centennial, CO

##### Combustion Performance & Carbon Monoxide Safety Certification Program

September 13-15: Centennial, CO

November 1-3: New Hudson, MI

#### \*TECH CLEAN CALIFORNIA TRAINING <http://ncilink.com/TECHCleanCA>

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June 14-16: Sacramento, CA

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June 23: Los Alamitos, CA

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##### Refrigerant-Side Performance Certification

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##### Commercial Air Balancing Certification Program

July 12-14: Los Alamitos, CA

##### Duct System Optimization & Residential Air Balancing Certification Program

July 19-21: Los Alamitos, CA

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

August 9-11: Los Alamitos, CA

##### Commercial System Performance Program

September 13-14: Los Alamitos, CA

##### Combustion Performance & Carbon Monoxide Safety Certification Program

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