### **JANUARY 2023**

# **CONTRACTOR**

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### **CONTRACTOR's AHR Expo 2023 Preview**

BY KELLY FALOON OF CONTRACTOR'S STAFF

This year the Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration (AHR) Expo returns to Atlanta, GA, home of the new ASHRAE global headquarters. The big show will be held at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Feb. 6-8.

Since the first International Heating and ▶ Turn to AHR, page 10



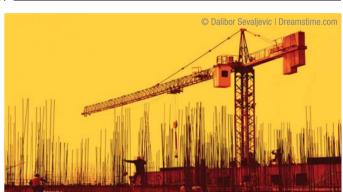
A floor shot from the 2022 Expo. More than 1,573 exhibitors from around the world made it to Las Vegas for the big show.

## ABC's Backlog Indicator at Highest Level Since Q2 2019

SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

WASHINGTON. DC - Associated Builders and Contractors reports that its Construction Backlog Indicator increased to 9.2 months in November, according to an ABC member survey conducted Nov. 21 to Dec. 6. The reading is 0.8 months higher than in November 2021.

 $\succ$  Turn to ABC, page 16



**CONTRACTOR INFOCUS** 

**U.S. SHIPMENTS** 

**OF RESIDENTIAL** 

**HEATERS** 

### **NKBA Announces 2023 Board of Directors**

SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

BETHLEHEM, PA — The NKBA, the leading trade association for the kitchen and bath industry and owner of the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS), has announced its 2023 Board of Directors. Jan Heck, President and CEO of Miele USA, was elected NKBA Board Chair, succeeding Basil E. Larkin, Senior Vice President of Sales at Hestan Commercial Corp.

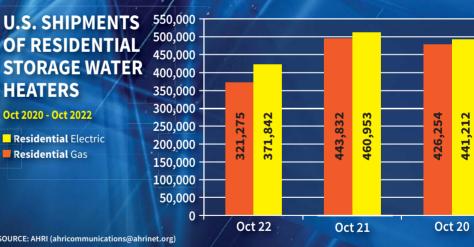
▶ Turn to NKBA, page 54



of Miele USA.

SOURCE: AHRI (ahricommunications@ahrinet.org)

Oct 2020 - Oct 2022 Residential Electric Residential Gas



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**Residential Circulator** 

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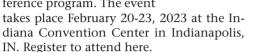


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### WWETT Show to Bring Wastewater, Environmental Service Pros Together

#### SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

INDIANAPOLIS, IN – Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment and Transport (WWETT), the world's largest annual trade show for wastewater and environmental service professionals, today unveils its conference program. The event



Marc Acampora, VP & Market Leader of the WWETT Show, said, "We are delighted to bring wastewater and environmental service professionals together with the leading minds in the industry

to help drive their businesses forward. There will be a tremendous amount of learning, Turn to WWETT, page 18

### Applewood Plumbing Caring Community Giveaway Spreads the Wealth this Holiday

SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

DENVER , CO — Applewood Plumbing Heating & Electric is spreading holiday cheer this December by donating \$1,000 to five charities: Colorado Gerontological Society, Denver Children's Home, Denver Giving Machines, Denver Santa Claus Shop, and Toys for Tots as part of their Caring Community Giveaway

> Turn to Applewood page 14



Giving Machines volunteers and representatives from Habitat for Humanity, Doctors Care and A Precious Child join Applewood Plumbing Heating & Electric to receive donation to Denver's Giving Machines.

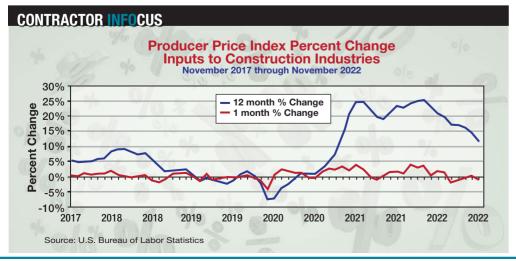
## Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical Donates Over \$12,000 to Toys for Tots

SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical (Hiller), the region's largest residential plumbing, HVAC, and electrical provider, is proud to partner with Toys for Tots for the fourth consecutive year. During a special Christmas promotion each holiday season, Hiller donates toys to Toys for Tots with the purchase of each new tankless water heater. **Turn to Hiller, page 8** 



Jimmy Hiller and the Hiller family with a truckful of toys to donate after shopping spree.



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You Don't Make it Easy

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### Industry News

### In Brief

Saniflo SFA recently completed a new group website as part of its evolving sales and marketing strategy. The improved website is designed to strengthen the group's visibility, provide a global vision of SFA's activities, and highlight the corporate's social responsibility and values. Visit https://www.saniflo.com to learn more.

Sonnhalter, a communications firm marketing to the professional tradesman in the construction, industrial and MRO markets, received a gold award in the "Trade Media Relations" category at the 20th Annual Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Cleveland Rocks Awards competition recognizing excellent communications programs and tactics.

XOi Technologies, a provider of technician-focused technology solutions, announces the addition of Chief Executive Officer Leon Weiss and Chief Product Officer Jeff Grisenthwaite to the company's leadership team. Weiss and Grisenthwaite each bring extensive executive experience in the software industry to XOi.

Malco Products announced that its safety and environmental manager, Chris Strand, has been appointed to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's Occupational Safety and Health Review Board. OSHRB acts as the final arbiter in contested OSHA citations that have gone through the full appeal process without resolution.

IAPMO R&T Lab has completed an acquisition of New Jerseybased **Quality Filter Testing** Laboratory, tripling the size of IAPMO R&T Lab's water system testing capacity commensurate with its growing Water Systems Certification Program and providing clients with even more options and the same high level of customer service.

**National Comfort Institute** and The Energy Conservatory are partnering to provide high-end performance tools to the HVAC and building performance industries. Effective immediately, NCI will no longer directly sell tools and instruments through its own website. The organization's members and students from their training classes will be able to purchase TEC tools and instruments directly from the TEC website.

## **CONTRACTOR**mag.com

Visit www.Contractormag.com for your daily dose of industry news!

### online exclusive **Top Stories**

- Max Duggan Wins the Golden Arm Award
- General Pipe Cleaners Names Angela Grieb Assistant National Sales Manager
- Goulds Water Technology to Exhibit at NGWA Groundwater Week 2022
- A. O. Smith Receives WAVE Water Stewardship Verification

### Videos & Media Galleries



For the latest news on the federal and local response. code and regulation developments, opinions and best practices from industry experts and more, bookmark CONTRACTOR'S Coronavirus News Page: www.contractormag.com/covid-19.

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- ► The engine that could: how contractors can produce a solid business plan
- ▶ 8 Simple ways to boost your monthly cash flow

## INDUSTRY

- Want to know what is on the mind of Ed O'Connell, business coach and consultant?
- Want to know about how to get the flow rates right in hydronics from master trainer Steve Swanson?
- Want to know what the 14 characteristics are of a professional plumbing company? Matt Michel will tell you.

If so, our Industry Perspectives page is the place for you! Visit Industry Perspectives today at contractormag.com/industry-perspectives-0

Want to converse with experts in the plumbing and hydronics industries? Then check out CONTRACTOR's Industry Perspectives, serving up thoughtful, conversational content from the industry experts you have gotten to know so well at www.Contractormag.com.

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<sup>1</sup>Available features vary by model

## CONTRACTOR's 2023 Econ Forecast: The Optimism Paradox

### BY STEVE SPAULDING OF CONTRACTOR'S STAFF

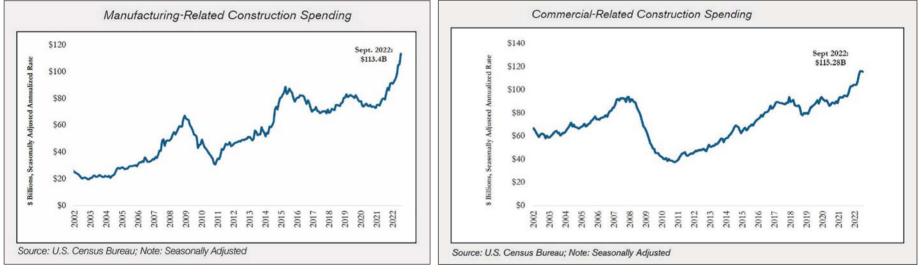
s we head into 2023, the economic picture is murky. While the US recorded negative GDP in the first two quarters of 2022 (putting us unofficially in a recession), Q3 marked an increase in GDP of 3.2%. Employment levels remain high (with the official unemployment rate as of December 2022 just 3.5%), with a concomitant upward pressure on wages. Inflation remains stubbornly high and the supply chain—while improved from a year ago—shows persistent problems.

Paradoxically, the general mood in the construction industry is positive, with most contractors showing record backlogs (in December, ABC's Backlog Indicator reached its highest level since Q2 of 2019), and moderate-to-high confidence in the business outlook for 2023. some steep sell-offs, most of the Fed's moves have been in line with market expectations. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has made it clear that the Fed is willing to risk, or even cause a recession if that's what it takes to bring inflation under control. (And history bears this out; the Fed triggered two "Next year, however, will not be a repeat of what the construction sector endured during the Great Recession when the financial system collapsed. Residential construction, already reeling from rising mortgage rates, will continue to contract and will be joined by nonresidential construction



fixed mortgage stands just above 7%), the housing shortage remains acute. According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the supply of homes for sale in the U.S.—typically measured in months of supply—reached a record low of just 1.6 months in January 2022. It has since climbed back to 8.6 months as of November of 2022. Despite that growth, supply is still not enough to meet demand—and it is demand that drives markets.

One of the most reliable leading indicators, the Architecture Billings Index (ABI), has only recently shown signs of a slowdown. After architecture firms experienced their first decline in billings in nearly two years in October of 2022, business conditions softened further in November as the ABI score fell to 46.6 (any score



### **The Inflation Situation**

The lead economic story for 2022 was inflation, and the Federal Reserve's efforts to keep it under control. Over the 12 months ending in June 2022, the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers increased 9.1%—the largest 12-month increase since the 12-month period ending November 1981. In response, the Fed hiked the Federal Funds Rate seven times in 2022. The rate now stands at 4.25%-4.50% pushing borrowing costs to the highest level since 2007.

While the stock market has seen

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recessions in the 1980s as a direct result of its inflation-fighting policies.)

"The Federal Reserve's ongoing battle with inflation has raised concerns that a recession is imminent in the new year," said Richard Branch, chief economist for Dodge Construction Network during the 2023 Dodge Construction Outlook delivered on November 15, 2022. "Regardless of the label, the economy is slated to significantly slow, unemployment will edge higher, and for parts of the construction sector it will feel like a recession. as the commercial sector retrenches. The funds provided to the construction industry through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), The CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will counter the downturn allowing the construction to tread water."

### **The Construction Market**

What will the construction market look like in 2023? While mortgage rates have risen (at the time of this writing the current average on a 30-year below 50 indicates a decline in firm billings). While inquiries into new projects continued to rise modestly, the value of new design contracts also declined further in November.

Moving from the buyers and architects to the builders themselves, Associated Builders and Contractors reported in November 2022 that its Construction Backlog Indicator declined to 8.8 months in October, according to a member survey conducted Oct. 20 to Nov. 4. The reading is 0.7 **Turn to Econ Forecast, page 58** 



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### **Mavien**

## Hiller Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical Donates Over \$12,000 to Toys for Tots

#### Continued from page 3

Since 2019, Hiller has purchased over \$33,000 in toys to donate to underserved families in our community.

During this special promotion, available from November 15th through the end of the year, Hiller sets aside \$50 from each tankless water heater sold to purchase toys for donation. And, as a special incentive to homeowners, Hiller offered a \$250 Visa gift card with every purchase. So far this year, over \$7,000 has been raised from this special sale. Hiller contributed an additional \$5,000 towards the donation.

Toys for Tots is a non-profit organization launched by the U.S. Marine Corps

in 1947. The organization is dedicated to providing new Christmas gifts to children and young adults who may otherwise not receive presents during the holidays. To date, Toys for Tots has

children, and their grandchildren shop for a truck's worth of toys to donate. This shopping spree has quickly become one of the family's most anticipated Christmas events.

### **Company's Christmas promotion** enters its fourth year.

supported over 281 million children with over 627 million toys and gifts.

Each year, using the funds raised from this promotion, Hiller's Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Jimmy Hiller, his wife Michelle, their

"The Toys for Tots shopping spree has become one of my family's most cherished holiday traditions", remarked Jimmy Hiller. "For many families, the holidays can be stressful and challenging. With the help of our customers, we're able to alleviate some of that stress, making sure that every child experiences the joy of Christmas - regardless of their financial situation. We are so fortunate", he continued, "to give back to families in the community that has been so good to us."

On Monday, December 19th, the Hiller family met at a local Target to shop together, hand-selecting new toys, electronics, and gifts for other families to enjoy on Christmas morning. This year's donations, totaling over \$12,000, filled over 18 shopping carts with items from the Toys for Tots wish list. This donation, made possible by the community's support, follows donations of \$10,500 in 2021, \$5,500 in 2020, and \$5,000 in 2019.

Launched in 1990 with a single employee, Hiller has grown to include over 500 trucks and 700 team members across sixteen locations and seven states.

### **John Biggers Named President Charlotte Pipe and Foundry**

CHARLOTTE, NC – On November 15, 2022, the Char-Company Board of Directors elected John Biggers as President of

Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Company effective January 1, 2023. Current President and CEO Hooper Hardison will remain in the role of CEO.



"Over the past 33 years of service, John has proven himself to be an ac-



complished executive and an effective leader," said Hooper Hardison, CEO of Charlotte Pipe and Foundry. "His years of experience, his tremendous knowledge of our business and the plumbing industry, and his long- standing customer relationships will serve him well in his new role."

John joined Charlotte Pipe on June 5, 1989. John worked through many departments at the company's Cast Iron and Plastics divisions before moving to the Administrative location to work in the Customer Service area. John later became a Regional Sales Manager with responsibilities for the Washington DC/Baltimore/ Northern Virginia region as well as the greater New York City area, New Jersey, and upstate New York. He was promoted to Senior Vice President, Sales on January 1, 2012. Since that time, John has overseen tremendous growth in all our sales channels across the country.



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## **CONTRACTOR's AHR Expo 2023 Preview**

#### Continued from page 1

Ventilating Exposition in 1930, the Expo has grown from a small section of the National Exposition of Power and Mechanical Engineering to what is now "the world's largest HVAC/R marketplace."

The size and scope of the event now make it the go-to show not just for HVAC professionals, but also for pros involved in plumbing, piping, radiant heating and hydronic systems, controls, tools, business support services, building automation and much, much more.

### Make the most of your time at the big show in Atlanta.

Last year the show made its post-COVID return in Las Vegas, and drew 30,678 attendees, including 1,573 exhibitors. This year's show is expected to surpass those numbers. With so much to see and do, we hope this preview can give you some ideas to help make the best use of your time, on and off the expo floor.

### Education Opportunities: Understanding Real-World Applications

Decarbonization and electrification. Low global-warming refrigerants. IT and the connected consumer. New demands for efficiency. Automation. Supply chain issues, new practices adapted out of necessity, and new ways of moving product across the chain. Forecasts and planning for this year and beyond. The new role of HVACR in the budget. Skilled workforce issues. Cybersecurity and the need to plan for a connected future.

Navigating these issues can be confusing and frustrating for today's HVACR professionals—contractors, engineers, facility managers/owners, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, and manufacturers' representatives. Luckily, they can discover new products and technologies, and learn new best practices to help them with their



Attendees at the gates of the 2022 AHR Expo in Las Vegas, NV.

businesses this year's AHR Expo.

The 2023 educational program features more than 200 free sessions, including a panel series, new product and technology presentations, professional certifications and continuing education courses. In addition, the program has been extended to include Dec. 8 sessions.

"The education program has grown tremendously in recent years," notes Show Manager Mark Stevens. "The HVACR industry is changing and growing quickly and in ways that are new to us all. We're talking about training a new workforce to replenish a wave of retirement while simultaneously taking on initiatives relating to environmental efficiency, indoor air quality, automation, cybersecurity, supply chain disruptions, new business practices, etc. There is no shortage of necessary discussions."

### 2023 Expo Panel Series

AHR debuted the panel series at the 2022 show. This year, the series is back with five industry-related discussions.

- 2023 State of the Industry. This update with industry association leaders examines the current challenges, opportunities and forecasts for the year ahead in HVACR. Expected topics include changing regulations, the economic forecast (including inflation and tariffs), the green transition and the supply chain.
- **Decarbonization.** HVACR

professionals from engineering, government, owners and education lead the discussion regarding decarbonization and the industry's role in preparedness, regulation and standard planning, opportunities, challenges and expectations.

- **Communication Across the Supply Chain.** A conversation surrounding the flow of communication within the industry to better understand how shareholder audiences currently receive and understand information and identify the best places to source information. This discussion examines the current communication flow gaps, starting with standards writing to manufacturer implementation and following the chain through equipment installation and maintenance.
- **Basics of Refrigerant Changeover.** Leaders discuss the breakdown of what changes are occurring, when they are happening, and the expectations at the manufacturer level and in the field.
- **HVAC and Social Media.** The Dec. 8 session includes a panel of HVACR professionals.

A full list of panel discussions can be found at *http://bit.ly/3FYcRNo*.

### **Educational Sessions**

This year, HVACR professionals can choose from 85 sessions led by industry experts (*http://bit.ly/3WjzliP*). "Our sessions aim to provide diverse perspectives from all the voices that work and serve HVACR," explains Kimberly Pires, AHR Expo education program coordinator. "This kind of insight supports cooperation within the community and progress in an individual's professional growth, proving itself immensely valuable for the advancement of the industry as a whole."

Topic categories include air conditioning, best practices/application optimization, building automation and control, building design, building solutions, certification, commissioning, energy conservation/efficiency, facility/building management, heating, HVACR systems and equipment, indoor air quality, plumbing, refrigeration, renewable energy, standards/ codes, testing/balancing, trends and ventilation.

For attendees interested in **energy-efficient solutions**, these sessions are available: Why You Should Use Solar HVAC Units (Feb. 6), Energy Rating Labels: Resource to Increase the Efficiency of Pumping Systems (Feb. 6), Innovations in Thermal Energy Storage (Feb. 6), Fundamentals of Adiabatic Heat Rejection (Feb. 6), Geothermal Coupled Piped Infrastructure Upgrades Are Balancing our Energy Budget (Feb. 7), Resilient HVAC Systems (Feb. 7), and The Distribution Efficiency and Adaptability of Hydronics (Feb. 8).

**IAQ** sessions available: Improving Indoor Air Quality in Commercial Spaces (Feb. 6), Environmental Benefits of Circulating Fans (Feb. 6), Healthy Buildings and Indoor Environmental Quality (Feb. 7), and Best Practices for Education Facilities (Feb. 7).

Updates on **standards**, **regulations and codes** are covered in these sessions: Status Update on Refrigerant Classification, Specification and Recovery Standards (Feb. 6); Update on Fan-Efficiency Regulations (Feb. 6); UL Rated Ceiling Radiation Dampers: A Closer Look (Feb. 6); The Regulatory Report: 2022 Changes and What You Need to Know in 2023 (Feb. 7); and HVAC Regulatory Changes: What Can Companies Do to Prepare & Leverage Opportunities? (Feb. 7).

Attendees can participate in professional development courses through

# 

The 2023 educational program features more than 200 free sessions, including a panel series, new product and technology presentations, professional certifications and continuing education courses.

ASHRAE Learning Institute and short courses/professional development seminars approved for continuing education units.

ASHRAE Learning Institute courses charge a fee; the 20 sessions run from Feb. 4-7. You can find the course list at *http://bit.ly/3FNlxGd*.

#### New Product and Technology Theater

More than 145 exhibitor presentations are part of the New Product & Technology Theater, held on the exhibit floor in Building C of the Georgia World Congress Center. These are 20-minute sessions providing brief overviews of new product announcements and technologies found in exhibitor booths on the show floor. No fee or registration is required; you can find a list of presentations and times at *http://bit.ly/3WCVjNl*.

Five 2023 Innovation Award winners will offer presentations this year: Belimo Americas (IAQ room sensor), cove.tool (load modeling software), Emerson (Copeland ZPSK7 scroll compressor (heating) and ZFW variable-speed scroll solution (refrigeration)), NAVAC (Breakfree power flaring tool) and SmartD Technologies (Clean Power variable-frequency drive).

Each year, HVACR manufacturers spend time and money to improve HVACR equipment, tools or technology. Other 2023 Innovation Award winners you can view and visit on the show floor include Caleffi 536 Series PresCal pressure-relief valve (plumbing), Cielo Breez Max (building automation), Chemours Opteon XL41 refrigerant (cooling) and Taco Control Solutions' System M (sustainable solutions).

Funds raised from the entry fees of the Innovation Awards competition will be donated to the Atlanta College and Career Academy, an Atlanta-based technical high school.

For an editor's selection of some of the products being displayed and demonstrated at AHR, visit:

www.contractormag.com/mediagalleries/media-gallery/21256738/ weekly-product-gallery-ahr-expo-2023preview

For a full list of the 2023 AHR Expo Innovation Awards Winners, visit:

www.contractormag.com/industry-event-news/ahr/media-gallery/ 21253569/ahr-expo-announces-2023innovation-awards-winners

### **Podcast Pavilion**

For the third year as a show feature, AHR attendees can listen, watch and participate in live podcasts from the trade show. At the 2022 show in Las Vegas, the Podcast Pavilion was a fan favorite.

This year, 17 podcasters will broadcast from two pavilions over the three days: ACHR The News, Appetite for **Turn to AHR, page 12** 

### **AHR Product Preview**

BY STEVE SPAULDING OF CONTRACTOR'S STAFF

THE E90-E INTEGRATED PUMP SOLUTION from Xylem features state-of-the-

art technology designed to maximize pump performance and efficiency. It can communicate with other building systems. High efficiency hydraulic design lowers energy cost, shrinks carbon footprint and helps meet government regulations. As an integrated pump solution, (including VFD, motor, and pump) it reduces equipment needs, and ensures reliable performance and maximum savings. Remote system monitors equipment health alerts before failure to prevent unplanned downtime.



**THE PEAKFLOW C SCALE PREVENTION SYSTEM** from **Navien** prevents scale by converting dissolved hardness minerals into powerless particles that will not



attach themselves onto any of the components in the system. Peak-Flow C, when sized correctly for the installation, will help to ensure the longevity of your system, and

help eliminate hard water quality problems. Scale build-up from hard water is the biggest single reason for reduced performance. It operates at a maximum pressure of 90 psi/6.2 bar, and a maximum temperature of 100°F/38°C. It features 1" MEP inlet/outlet connections, a service flow rate of up to 20 GPM (76 L/m) and a continuous flow rate of up to 16 GPM (60 L/m).

**THE AQUAPORT WATER HEATING INNOVATION** from **Uponor** eliminates centralized domestic hot water (DHW) and recirculation piping in a structure to provide numerous benefits, including energy and water savings,

improved water quality, installation efficiencies, and reduced maintenance. Compared to traditional pipe-routing methods, incorporating AquaPorts can reduce hot-water energy use by up to 35%, eliminate up to 40% of unnecessary piping, and remove more than 50% of the total DHW volume in a building for improved system performance, efficiencies, and hygiene. The compact, in-wall design is only 25.6" (650 mm) tall by





14.5" (368 mm) wide and 5.4" (137 mm) deep to maximize overall square footage. Additionally, the AquaPort is extremely lightweight at 47 lbs. (21.3 kg) for the 100K BTU/hr. version and 57 lbs. (25.9 kg) for the 180K BTU/hr. version, which makes it easy for one person to maneuver and install.

**THE DEMAND DUO R-SERIES** from **Rinnai** is a commercial hybrid water heating system that is a non-condensing, Category 1 appliance that replaces traditional atmospheric tanks. The R-Series connects easily to an existing 6" galvanized exhaust vent and ships with additional B-Vent pieces to make installation easy without having to purchase further venting. The unit also comes with a 3 ft. long gas flex line for quick installation and cold water inlet connections at either the top or bottom of the tank for install flexibility. All of this makes the Demand Duo R-Series the better choice for replacing existing atmospheric tanks.

### THE YORK CYK COMPOUND CENTRIFUGAL

**WATER-TO-WATER HEAT PUMP** from **Johnson Controls** utilizes a two-compressor design to operate beyond the temperature range of typical centrifugal

chillers. Designed specifically for high-temperature heating applications, the CYK heat pump can deliver water temperatures up to 170 F, making it ideal for electrification of existing building heating systems. In facilities where simultaneous heating and cooling loads exist, the CYK heat pump is up to five times more efficient than the traditional chiller and boiler combination.



## **CONTRACTOR's AHR Expo 2023 Preview**

#### > Continued from page 11

Construction, ASHRAE Journal, Commercial Kitchen Chronicles, HVAC Excellence, HVAC Jerks, HVAC R&D, HVAC Refer Guy, HVAC School, HVAC Uncensored, Make Trades Great Again, PHCPPros, Refrigerant365, Refrigeration Mentor, Service Business Mastery, Tool Pros and Tool Wife.

Both podcast areas are in Building C of the Georgia World Congress Center.

### **Resources**

The AHR Expo has an official app for iOS and Android. Links to the app at the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store can be found at *www. ahrexpo.com/app* 

With, it, attendees can quickly navigate show information, browse an interactive show floorplan, and easily find exhibitors via product category search.

The App also offers an official show planner, to sync and manage their show and education program schedule. (A desktop version of the show planner can be found at *ahr23*. *mapyourshow.com/8\_0/login/ login.cfm.*)

The planner allows users to save sessions and appointments, to create a personalized calendar of show events, and even offers exhibitor and product recommendations.

The Georgia World Congress Center Authority has a guide on its website to both the Centennial Park District and the Greater Atlanta area for those who may be new to the city. It



**Podcast Pavillion.** 

is available at: www.gwcca.org/explore.

Remember: wear comfortable shoes, stay hydrated, bring a snack (busy schedules and sometimes long lines at concessions stands can mean skipping lunch), and stay in your hotel if you're feeling sick. And by all means, please stop by the CONTRACTOR booth; we will be in **Building C, Level 1, Booth #C5764**. We'll see you at the show!

Kelly Faloon is a contributing writer to CONTRACTOR Magazine and principal of Faloon Editorial Services. The former editor of Plumbing & Mechanical magazine, she has nearly 35 years of experience in B2B publishing,

with 25 of those years writing about the plumbing, heating, cooling and piping industry. Faloon is a journalism graduate of Michigan State University. You can reach her at kelly@falooneditorial services.com.



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### **Applewood Spreads the Wealth this Holiday Season**

#### ► Continued from page 3

"Each of these charities are an integral part of someone's holiday experience," said Josh Ward, owner of Applewood Plumbing Heating & Electric. "By contributing to all of them, we can ensure that children, adults and families have what they need this holiday season."

**Colorado Gerontological Soci**ety provides information, education and training, research and public policy for professionals who work in the field of aging, as well as to provide services for older adults and families. Since its inception in 1980, the society has been a leader to improve the health equity of older adults by being an active stakeholder in the social, economic, health and political systems in Colorado; continuously advocating



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for the improvement of the quality of life of older adults.

**Denver Children's Home** provides a comprehensive therapeutic and educational continuum of care for the region's abused, neglected and traumatized children and their families with mental health issues. They offer prevention, intervention and treatment programs grounded in traumainformed care and the latest in brain-development research.

### Applewood has donated more than \$250,000 to Denver-metro area nonprofits.

**Denver Giving Machines** is a part of the annual Light the World initiative, organized by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to support local nonprofits by making the process of donating to them as easy as buying candy out of a vending machine. The machines themselves, feature five local Denver- based organizations and three international organizations.

**Denver Santa Claus Shop** collects and provides free toys to local children ages 0-11, many of whom might not otherwise have a toy to open during the holidays. Volunteers create a large, temporary toy store every year for the Denver Santa Claus Shop. Families in need are referred by Denver Human Services, other social service agencies and community partners.

**Toys for Tots** objective is to help less fortunate children throughout the country experience the joy of the holidays; by providing toys to children in need. Through local collaborations and partnerships and individual donations they are able to reach thousands of children each year.

Applewood has donated more than \$250,000 to Denver-metro area nonprofits through their Caring Community Giveaway over the past 16 years.

To learn more about Applewood's community efforts, visit *www.ApplewoodFixIt.com*.

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### **Features**

- The most efficient heat pump water heater on the market
- Reduces energy bills by an estimated 78%\*
- Industry's quietest heat pump at 45 dBA
- Versatile top and side connections
- Integrated leak detection and compatible with automatic shut-off valve

### The Voltex<sup>®</sup> AL saves homeowners up to \$607 per year in energy costs and provides peace of mind with new leak protection technology.

With an industry-best 4.02 UEF, the Voltex AL Smart Heat Pump will save homeowners up to \$607 annually on energy bills. Our Anti-Leak technology couples leak detection and optional automatic shut-off features with iCOMM<sup>™</sup> connectivity to outsmart leaks. It's the most efficient way to heat water—and the best way to achieve peace of mind.

\*Comparing 66-gallon heat pump against pre-2015 similarly sized standard electric using DOE EF to UEF conversion rates. Savings may vary.

### ABC's Backlog Indicator at Highest Level Since Q2 2019

#### > Continued from page 1

View ABC's Construction Backlog Indicator and Construction Confidence Index tables for

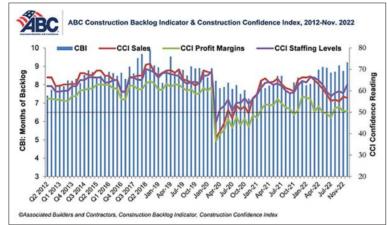
November 2022.

Backlog is now at its highest level since the second quarter of 2019. The increase in backlog observed in November is largely attributed to contractors with under \$30 million in revenue, which now have their highest level of backlog in over three years.

ABC's Construction

Confidence Index reading for profit Analysis margins and staffing increased in November, while the reading for sales inched lower. All three readings

remain above the threshold of 50, indicating expectations of growth over the next six months.



"The rise in backlog is remarkable and unexpected," said ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu. "A number

of contractors have been reporting that their backlog has risen rapidly over the past three months, which

> is counterintuitive given the pervasive view that the broader economy is headed into recession.

> "The improvement in backlog was particularly sharp in the commercial and institutional category, and health care-related construction has emerged as a major driver of new activity," said Basu. "While

it seems unlikely that backlog will hold up in the face of the Federal Reserve's efforts to slow demand, many predicted that backlog would have

dipped by now and that has yet to transpire. What's more, many contractors expect sales and staffing levels to climb over the next six months, while profit margins are projected to remain stable."

Note: The reference months for the Construction Backlog Indicator and Construction Confidence Index data series were revised on May 12, 2020, to better reflect the survey period. CBI quantifies the previous month's work under contract based on the latest financials available, while CCI measures contractors' outlook for the next six months.

Visit abc.org/economics for the Construction Backlog Indicator and Construction Confidence Index, plus analysis of spending, employment, job openings, GDP and the Producer Price Index.



Patrick Linhardt is a thirty-seven-year veteran of the hydronics industry who has been designing and troubleshooting steam and hot water heating systems, pumps and controls on an almost daily basis.

Pat has been a regular monthly columnist for CONTRACTOR Magazine since 2019, where his column has become the cornerstone of our Hydronics & Radiant section. We are proud to publish this selection of his recent work, and hope these columns serve to educate and inspire a new generation in the industry.

https://www.contractormag.com/learning-resources/whitepapers/ whitepaper/21182872/download-best-of-pat-linhardt





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PLUMBING



## KEEP LIVING THE SMALL BUSINESS OREA

### WWETT Show to Bring Wastewater and Environmental Service Professionals Together in February

### > Continued from page 3

exploring, networking, and fun to be had this winter in Indianapolis."

The WWETT accredited conference program delivers unparalleled education including nearly 100 sessions across 21 tracks targeted to municipalities, plumbers, portable sanitation professionals, septic contractors, sewer contractors and wastewater professionals.

Chad Williams, resilience speaker, bestselling author and Navy SEAL, will deliver the keynote address. Williams draws from his experience in military to provide a Navy SEAL's perspective on issues related to effective leadership, resilience, teamwork, overcoming adversity and motivation.

### Conference Program Highlights

- Seven national associations leading education
- Two Technical Tours
- Women in the Industry Networking event
- New to the industry networking event
- New Diversity Track
- Four-hour Confined Space Entry Training
- Two workshops on Management/ Leadership
- Eight-hour certification classes led by National Association of

Wastewater Technicians and Portable Sanitation Association International

Many sessions count toward fulfilling required continuing educational units (CEUs) and professional development hours (PDHs).

In addition, the Expo Hall will showcase new and innovative products from 500+ exhibitors such as FedRecycling Association (NOWRA) will be conducting the National **Backhoe ROE-D-HOE**®

### Championship Competition.

The three-day open event allows attendees who are skilled backhoe operators compete by using the backhoe bucket to skillfully and smoothly move small objects such as a golf ball or bowling pin

## Annual trade show unveils its conference program.

eral Signal, Environmental Solutions Group, Satellite Industries, Vac-Con, Inc and CUES, Inc.

### **Additional Highlights**

- The NAWT Shootout brings awareness to the updated Federal Regulations regarding Pre-Trip inspections. It also gives individuals who will be testing soon for their CDLs an opportunity to practice their Pre-Trip Inspections and those that already have their CDLs an opportunity to learn what the new regulations cover and how to respond to roadside inspections. The top four individuals with the most correctly identified problems will be named winners.
- The National Onsite Wastewater

in an extreme race against time. The competition is timed and will culminate with the contestants with the top three times winning belt buckles in addition to up to \$1,000 in cash prizes.

- WWETT Talks Live is a new interview series that will feature bite-sized insights from the wastewater industry's most innovative leaders. It will cover the state of the industry, which trends to adopt and which ones to avoid, leadership and roles in company structures, becoming a multidimensional operation, trials and tribulations of expanding and the importance of your work and community impact.
- Operators Without Borders

provides certified, volunteer water and wastewater operators who can support utilities in developing countries following emergency and disaster situations to ensure that safe drinking water and wastewater management services are resumed. On February 21 at 4:00 p.m., a special Happy Hour General Session will be hosted at booth #2149 in the Expo Hall to discuss the current situation of water and wastewater utilities in Ukraine and how we can help.

- WWETT will show the documentary *Sh\*t Saves the World*, which provides an intriguing and humorous glimpse into our species' impact on the Earth by exploring how one of the most simple and obvious solutions to aid the environment may lie in what we often look down upon as waste.
- IndyHumane has been committed to helping central Indiana's pets in need since 1905. The organization's locations collectively support an average of 10,000 animals each year, roughly 90 percent of which are adopted. In booth #5935 in the Expo Hall there will be dogs and kittens to meet, play with and adopt.
- The **Welcome Party** takes place February 21 at 5:00 p.m. at The Grand Hall @ Downtown Union Station.

### **Resources**

The WWETT Show has launched the Making Waves Podcast, which interviews the most interesting voices in and around the wastewater industry. Click here to listen.

To become a WWETT sponsor, contact Juliana Sherwood at Juliana. Sherwood@informa.com.

To register for a media pass, email *meryl.franzman@informa.com*.

Learn more about the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show at *www.wwett show.com.* 

## The Unified Group Announces Service Unlimited, Inc. as Recipient of 2022 Making the Difference Award

BROADVIEW, IL — Each year during The Unified Group's Annual Meeting & Owners' Forum, one member company receives the annual *Making the Difference Award*. During this year's Owners' meeting, hosted in the Cayman Islands, Service Unlimited, Inc., based out of New Castle, Delaware, was recognized as the most deserving recipient of the 2022 Making the Difference Award.

The Service Unlimited, Inc. team showcases a variety of outstanding qualities, including their care and passion for the members of the group, above-and-



The Service Unlimited, Inc. team with their Making the Difference Award.

beyond participation in meetings, and consistent drive toward excellence. Their leadership provides a welcoming environment to all members, while always sharing relevant and valuable information in group discussions.

In 2022, Service Unlimited, Inc. attended six of the seven professional development meetings, numerous webinars and regularly participates in The Unified Group's email tool discussions to provide best ideas. The Service Unlimited, Inc.'s team continually looks to learn and grow to provide benefit to their customers, employees and their peers within The Unified Group.

For more information on The Unified Group contact Janet Kelleher at *KelleherJ@theunifiedgroup.com.* **G** 



### SLOAN.

## A new design with a unique look.

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- Centriflo siphon jet powerflush
- FluidMaster<sup>®</sup> Fill and Flush Valve

Centriflo technology provides a more powerful flush thanks to a dualdelivery bowl design. With every flush, the new design delivers a surge of water, creating a vigorous water cyclone that clears and cleans the bowl. Learn more at sloan.com/gravity-toilets

## Carlson-Holohan Industry Award of Excellence Presentation at AHR Expo

MILWAUKEE, WI — After a yearlong delay due to the COVID pandemic, the ninth recipient of the distinguished Carlson-Holohan Industry Award of Excellence will be revealed at the AHR Expo in Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center. Caleffi North America is proud to host the formal award presentation and cocktail reception at Booth B3317 on Monday, Feb. 6 at 3 p.m. EST.

In the spirit of Gil Carlson and the vision of Dan Holohan and Robert Bean, the award was conceived in 2006. The award is presented every two years to a nominee with attributes including technical mastery and a passion for hydronic technologies, demonstrated leadership as an educator and



mentor, and an aptitude for cultivat-ing fundraising opportunities for industry causes. The candidate must be over the age of 40 and a citizen of the United States or Canada. Simply being considered for the award places the nominees in rarified air. Prior recipients include industry icons David Yates, Mark Eatherton, Kenneth Webster, John Barba, John Siegenthaler, John Goshulak, Ingrid Mattsson and most recently Bob "Hot Rod" Rohr.

Caleffi North America is proud to host the formal award presentation and cocktail reception at Booth B3317.

### VMA Presents Valve Forum Conference and Exhibits

WASHINGTON, DC — The Valve Manufacturers Association of America (VMA) announces the 2023 Valve Forum Conference & Exhibits. The 2023 event will take place April 17-19 in San Antonio, Texas.

The most comprehensive gathering place for all those in the valve industry value chain, the Valve Forum Conference & Exhibits offers solutions, content and business opportunities for the valve, valve actuator and valve automation industry. Thought leaders will present on

manufacturing, technical, marketing and management, and the all-new valve fundamentals tracks. This new track also includes an interactive valve "petting zoo" allowing attendees to get hands-on experience with valves and actuators.

Attendees will also be able to take advantage of business opportunities through networking events and tour the small exhibit area where they can discover the latest products and ser-



vices from valve industry suppliers and distributors. This year also offers a local facility tour opportunity.

"The VMA Valve Forum Conference & Exhibits continues to be the leading event for valve industry professionals," says Heather Rhoderick, VMA president. "This year's program is spearheaded by over 15-member company individuals who are all experts in their field. The sessions and speakers they've chosen focus on different aspects of data and technology and how they will continue to impact the industrial valve industry in the next few years, emerging trends in communications and manufacturing and new opportunities for the industry. I'm especially excited for the new Valve Fundamentals track that includes valve basics and repair sessions and the petting zoo. The event really offers education and networking for all those in the industry, regardless of their tenure."

The Valve Forum is open to all in the flow control industry. Manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, end users, engineers, consultants as well as college students interested in joining the valve industry will all find value in the information presented. Exhibit and sponsorship opportunities are also available.

Additional information including the program, speakers and registration can be found at *www.vma.org/valve forum*.

In the tradition of the award, Rohr, the 2020-22 recipient, will present a replica of a Bell & Gossett System Syzer wheel invented by Carlson to the next honoree. The unique circular slide rule calculates the relationship between flow rate, temperature change and heat transfer rate.

"Of the many pioneers and gurus in the hydronic industry, two stand out," said Rohr, training and education manager at Caleffi. "The work and teachings of Gil Carlson set the stage for the evolution of hydronic piping. Dan Holohan became a student of his and brought these concepts to the industry with his clever and witty teaching style. Numerous books Dan authored put the sometimes-confusing concept of primary secondary piping in understandable picture form. It has been an honor to be the keeper of this industry award, paying it forward to the next generation of hydronic designers, suppliers, installers and troubleshooters. Long may you 'pump-away.' "

Please contact Sharon Alexander at 414/238-2360 with questions.

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by AI Schwartz Plumbing contractor

## **Ethics and Trust**

welve or so years ago, I wrote a column titled "How to stay ethical in an unethical business." After reading my editor's (Steve Spaulding) parting comments in last month's issue, it occurred to me that it might be time to revisit those concepts.

The gist of Steve's column was trust; establishing it, nurturing it and keeping it in the forefront of your business dealings. Our businesses are more dependent upon trust than most others. Outside of service work we, as subcontractors, must provide materials, labor and other ex-

penses "up front" and then wait about a month to be paid for it in most instances. If that is not trust, I don't know what is. The history of construction subcontractors is littered with the carcasses of the many shops who have fallen victim to the unethical behavior of the people for whom they have labored "in advance" of being paid.

### Genesis

Sometimes the problems with getting paid timely are unanticipated, sometimes they are contrived and created with the idea of "breaking" a subcontractor for whatever reason the GC can convince themselves that it is okay to mess with another person's livelihood. That is where the ethics come in. Trust follows.

For any number of reasons, our industry seems to produce an inordinate number of charlatans. Whether it is the lure of perceived big profits or the misguided notion that it is an easy business to be in I don't know, but over the years I have seen, and dealt with, many general contractors who had no business being in the construction business. Many had worked as project superintendents for larger companies, some had merely been subcontractors for the various trades who decided that they could make the "big bucks" for themselves by running the whole show. Still others were fresh out of college, with stars in their eyes, after receiving a degree in construction management.



The history of construction subcontractors is littered with the carcasses of the many shops who have fallen victim to unethical behavior.

### **Cascading Cause and Effect**

Being "ethically challenged" and getting into a business where trust between parties is paramount is a recipe for disaster, in my opinion. Yet there always seemed to be a host of marginal players who hung out a shingle and started a construction company with little capital and even less ethics. The effect of this combination almost always leads to bankruptcy for all involved parties. The thing is, after suffering the collapse, more than a few of these people opened up another company, either with the same players or new front people, and began the same series of moves that lead to failure previously.

With the ethically challenged, the sequence is predictable. Start a licensed general contracting business (either residential or commercial). Bid a project, or negotiate one, with the owner/architect or both. Put the project out for bid to the various subcontractors. Assemble the project using the lowest bids. Begin construction. Get the draw money from either the bank or the owner. Pay only as much as you absolutely need to to keep the job flowing. When the subcontractors begin to balk, refuse to pay them until they either complete the project per "their" contract or until they walk away. Get another subcontractor to complete the project. Ignore preliens, or liens, and let the owners deal with them. Get into an irreversible bind on the job. Chances of being sued over contract breach are ignored. Take the money and close the doors. Then "rinse and repeat."

Does that seem jaded to you? Unfortunately, I have seen that exact scenario play out for sixty plus years in our industry. I have watched good people lose everything trying to do the right thing for the wrong people. For those who survived, a little perspective moving forward helped to keep them from doing the same thing over again.

### **Trust But Verify**

As we begin the new year of 2023, it is wise to consider the lessons of the past as enumerated above. While not all contractors are as described previously, there are enough of them to warrant a jaundiced eye when accepting a con-



tract to perform your piece of the project.

Contractors with whom you have an established relationship are excluded from this narrative. Specifically, because they are a known quantity. If you have worked with a GC on successful projects, done, and been paid for, change orders and then paid in full, you can pretty much assure yourself of continuing along those lines into the future.

Use caution when bidding and accepting work from a new contractor. It is your re-

sponsibility to do your due diligence, checking out that contractor as thoroughly as possible. Everything from qualifying party for their license, to their bonding and insurance company. If you can get financial information for them, so much the better.

Establishing trust in a business relationship is paramount. That trust must flow in both directions though. If you are the only one who invests in the trust while the other guy is not bound by it, you are borrowing trouble. Building trust, especially with a new contractor, takes time and a little leap of faith.

We live in perilous times for our industry and economy. You do not want to be a business casualty because you didn't take all proper steps to protect yourself when dealing with an unknown business. So, try to be sure when you extend your trust to a new business associate that they are worthy of it. Then do the right thing and keep true to your word. It's all you've got, after all. Happy New Year!

The Brooklyn, N.Y.-born author is a retired third generation master plumber. He founded Sunflower Plumbing & Heating in Shirley, N.Y., in 1975 and A Professional Commercial Plumbing Inc. in Phoenix in 1980. He holds residential, commercial, industrial and solar plumbing licenses and is certified in welding, clean rooms, polypropylene gas fusion and medical gas piping. He can be reached at allen@proquilldriver.com.

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### by Michael Richter and Adam Fiedor **GLC ADVISORS**

**4 Key Drivers That Enhance** 



Michael Richter

Adam Fiedor

ith economic uncertainty creating an everchanging marketplace, many services businesses have experienced new challenges over the past year, particularly those in the Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MEP) sector. Early in the year, labor shortages and supply chain disruptions drove increased labor and materials costs, while in the back half of the year, the MEP industry has been experiencing slowing building and renovation demand. It is no surprise profit margins are constantly fluctuating for many business owners in the MEP sector.

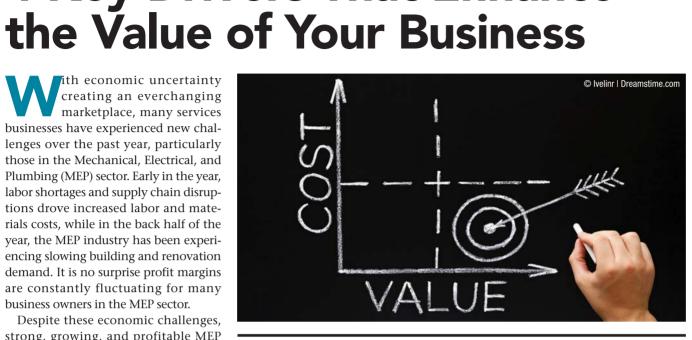
Despite these economic challenges, strong, growing, and profitable MEP businesses are still in high demand with buyers searching for mergers and acquisition (M&A) targets. In fact, the MEP industry is still seeing widespread acquirer interest-from newbuild-focused companies to renovation-focused businesses within both residential and commercial end markets.

Private equity acquirers like Monomoy Capital Partners and Gladstone Investment remain bullish on residential housing contractors, building products, and services due to an anticipated, prolonged housing shortage (even with elevated interest rates). Gladstone most recently acquired Dema Plumbing, Denver's largest new construction residential plumbing services contractor, a transaction in which GLC Advisors acted as Dema's exclusive financial advisor.

Our team sees a more normalized M&A environment in which quality sellers are being courted by acquirers that currently hold record amounts of dry powder. For MEP businesses looking to grow by aligning with a new partner or are starting to plan for an exit, there are key characteristics exhibited by quality MEP sellers resulting in favorable M&A outcomes.

### 1. A Track Record of Profit in **All Economic Environments**

It shouldn't come as a surprise that often the most important characteristic an acquirer looks for in a company is



There are key characteristics exhibited by quality MEP sellers that result in favorable M&A outcomes.

long-term sustainability of profit margins. Profit margins, in today's environment, are more critical than ever to showcase a historical track record of success and growth in any economic environment.

Strong profit margins demonstrate long-term, quality customer relationships, a differentiated service approach than competitors, leading market share position, and tech-enabled or tech-supported solutions-characteristics that thrive in economic expansions and withstand recessions. Acquirers like strong profitability that provides a high return on capital, cushion for "bumps in the road," and minimal outside capital investments needed to achieve future growth goals. We strongly advise businesses to have a defined plan for maintaining profitability and a detailed financial forecast model with scenario analyses to demonstrate outsized profitability.

### 2. Deep Management Team

Culture is a commanding force in M&A and a central determinant of an acquirer attributing premium pricing to a seller. MEP businesses are human capital intensive, and to acquirers, a strong culture, highly tenured staff, and deep leadership bench demonstrates low turnover and minimal new hire cost, leadership continuity post-transaction, and the ability to grow headcount quickly as the business scales. As the saying goes, "a business is only as good as its people." If staff demonstrates a track record of being operationally effective and growth-oriented, an acquirer can expect staff to continue to do so under new leadership.

For all the technical analysis and financial due diligence in M&A, business owners too often overlook the importance of the management team. A qualified and capable team of operators creates an efficient, profitable, and successful business without depending on the owner. An acquirer wants to continue to scale the business and looks for a management team to continue to run the business when the transaction closes under new ownership.

Before selling a business, there is enormous value in developing a robust management team that performs day-to-day operations (without the owner), ensuring the company has leadership continuity under new ownership. If an owner controls all aspects of the company, there is more risk for a buyer that the customers, staff, and success are tied to the owner. This dynamic results in a lower valuation for the seller.

Many MEP companies, especially those focused on new construction markets, rely on some form of subcontractor relationships to complete projects. Subcontractor-heavy MEP companies tend to produce lower margins, have less control over quality, and are less differentiated than competitors in the market. We see more excitement from acquirers when sellers have significant self-perform capabilities with in-house teams completing on-site work driving higher margins alongside higher quality, differentiated services.

### 3. Recurring, Diverse Customer **Base, Broad Market Exposure**

Sellers with recurring or "re-occurring" revenue models and a diversified customer base are more appealing to strategic acquirers due to the value of a visible, predictable revenue model. These revenue models produce fewer fluctuations in business results, lower downside risk, and forecast models aligning more accurately to actual results.

Contracted, recurring customers are more favorable than one-time project customers. However, one-time projects from repeat customers are viewed favorably and are considered re-occurring revenue. Acquirers view recurring and re-occurring revenue from repeat customers as predictors for future success.

Further, a diversified customer base significantly increases the value of an MEP business. Customer concentration, or reliance on a small number of large customers, introduces risk of losing significant revenue upon the loss of a single customer. In today's market, acquirers are less risk tolerant and mitigate risk in the form of seeking sellers with many customers from a broad range of end markets. Specifically, when a single customer accounts for more than 25% of revenue, the impact on value is substantial.

Turn to 4 Key Drivers page 51

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## Our Contractor of the Year: LINDA HUDEK The 'Can Do' Kid

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> From entering the trades at an early age, to owning her own business, to becoming the President of PHCC Ohio, there is nothing that this Contractor of the Year really can't do.

> > By John Mesenbrink, Editor-at-Large

AIRFIELD, OH — Swimming in the extremely murky 60° water with waves constantly smashing her face when she would come up for air, Linda Hudek began to question her sanity, as she asked herself, "Why on earth did I sign up for this? What happens if a shark comes around? Would I get in trouble for punching that guy for kicking me in the face?"

You see, Hudek participated in the Alcatraz Sharkfest Swim some years back in the frigid waters of the San Francisco Bay. It was a 1.5-mile swim, "and stupidly it was my first major open water swim," she recalls. "They hauled more than 800 of us out on to two ferries from the mainland out to Alcatraz Island, where they stopped and said 'jump in.'"

It was very cold, says Hudek, but also a very "cool" experience. "If and when I do it again, I'll be sure to

drink way more water, practice more and maybe wear more than a bathing suit," says Hudek.

### **Contractor of the Year: Say What?**

Upon hearing the news that she had been selected *CONTRACTOR Magazine's* "Contractor of the Year," Linda Hudek, Master Plumber, LH Plumbing Services LLC, responded, "Why me? There are certainly better candidates out there that do better work."

But it's that selflessness and "Can Do" attitude that separates Linda from the rest. And that "Can Do" has become a mantra for Hudek as she strives for excellence in her professional and personal life. Both Hudek's mom and dad—Herma and John—taught her from an early age how important a solid work ethic was. "I saw firsthand how my dad had to overcome adversities within his company and our trade in general, and he always persevered," says Hudek.

Hudek's father's "Can Do" attitude, which was adopted from his time as a Seabee in the U.S. Navy, was passed down to both Hudek and her sister. One of their mottos for a long time, "He's been screaming 'Can Do' since I was a little girl. He calls me his 'Can Do Kid,'" says Hudek.

And, Hudek's faith was a big part of her upbringing. "My parents' faith in Jesus Christ, keeping us in church and teaching us about God has shaped me into who I am today," continues Hudek.

### **The Beginning**

Hudek began working in the trades at the age of 17 with her dad in commercial new construction plumbing. Although she had plans to attend the Ohio State University at the time for agricultural studies, Hudek

UMBING VICES LLC "The Brunette Plumber" -- Master Plumber and owner-operator of LH Plumbing Services LLC. JANUARY 2023 • 27 decided it was plumbing that was enjoyable and challenging, and it really helped her come out of her shell as an "awkward" teen at the time.

"I began working for my father the summer before my senior year of high school just to have a job and I decided that I really loved it. Although much to his displeasure at the time, he didn't want me in such a rough environment," jokes Hudek. "I enjoyed the new challenges on a daily basis and the feeling of accomplishment that comes with physical, tangible work. I also loved the constantly varied workplaces and meeting new people on each and every project. I went to college at night and also obtained an Associates in Business Management degree while working for him, as well," says Hudek.

It always seemed like a natural progression for Hudek to eventually run her own company and work for herself one day. Hudek went through a brief phase when she thought about working for someone else or even pursuing a career as an inspector, but none of that fit the bill at the time. She was not interested in taking over her dad's company either. "I wanted to start something of my own, that was wholly mine and that no one could ever say was handed to me. If that sounds a little prideful and vain, well I'll be the first to admit those faults," says Hudek.

### **Getting It Done**

Heading into year 13, Hudek has owned her business since 2010, not without its challenges. Much of her early work as a sole proprietor was still commercial



In addition to the routine business of residential/light commercial plumbing, Hudek also takes on jobs where her scuba diving skills come in handy.

new construction plumbing. There were definitely times when she was concerned with finding projects to bid on, recalls Hudek. "As a few years went by, I began to transition more into service plumbing, and there were many times that I was frustrated that the phone wasn't ringing."

With that "Can Do" attitude, Hudek kept charging forward. For Hudek, networking with other contractors was huge. Within her own field and in her local area, Hudek always offered to help other shops—usually one-person shops like her own—that needed help on a project or were overrun. Hudek mailed advertising flyers out to various areas in her county.

When Hudek eventually transitioned into service, she would also ask her local plumbing supply house to refer her to customers that might call. She tried



When Hudek branched out into drain cleaning, other contractors who didn't perform the work or have the equipment would refer her jobs.

participating in local ad campaign mailers, which, by the way, she would never do again due to the quality of customers that would respond.

She branched out into drain cleaning; many other contractors who don't like to do it or just don't have the equipment would refer Hudek for those jobs. And, word-of-mouth advertising was critical as the years progressed.

Hudek has been in the shop location of her dreams, and has since migrated to a majority of service work in both commercial and residential sectors with some plumbing remodeling. In addition to residential and commercial service plumbing and drain cleaning, her talents include natural gas, sewer and water line replacements, backflow testing, and plumbing projects that require scuba diving.

### **Getting Involved**

Hudek joined her local Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors (PHCC) chapter as a board member, became the Vice President of PHCC Ohio, and currently is the sitting PHCC Ohio President. The PHCC progression started when she was asked if she would like to become Vice President after attending one of the state meetings and providing some ideas as to how to garner support for the residential licensing bill.

Hudek is very proud and honored to be President of PHCC Ohio, which lobbies the state legislature and often national—to protect and benefit not just the trades, tradesmen and companies, but the end consumer as well. "The health of the nation is always top priority," says Hudek.

"Currently, we are working on passing a residential plumbing licensing bill in Ohio and opposing another bill that would harm Ohio businesses—including plumbing contractors," says Hudek. "We also support our up-and-coming young plumbers through scholarships, competitions and apprenticeship programs, and I am continuously looking for new ways to reach out to young people in order to promote the trade as well."

### **Inclusion & Perseverance**

Overall, Hudek would like to see more women—and men—entering the trades. She will be the first to say that the trades are not for everyone—you need to be physically fit, you need to be able to get your hands dirty, you need to be mechanically inclined, and not every job will be rainbows and butterflies, says Hudek.

"But what you often have is steady income, honest money, and a trade where there is such as huge variety of avenues to take. You can specialize in backflow testing, you can aim to do new construction, or you can gear your company toward remodels, drain cleaning, boilers, etc.—the sky is the limit."

Hudek considers herself a mentor for anyone wanting to join the trades. If you are willing to work, willing to learn and can turn a wrench, says Hudek, you can be taught. "And if you're a woman, there's a place here for you. I'm a woman, but when I'm on the job, I'm a plumber first and foremost," says Hudek.

Admittedly, there are many days Hudek comes home late, tired and filthy. "I frequently ask myself if it's all worth it—both plumbing by itself and owning my company as well. Plumbing can be difficult, labor intensive and exhausting on some days and on others it's more on the technical side and troubleshooting," says Hudek.

Yet, Hudek finds that the finished product of providing a necessary service to homes and businesses outweighs the negatives. "I enjoy the latitude and variety that this trade provides for me. I made so many mistakes when I was a younger plumber and to see the knowledge I have acquired and the progress I have made is supremely satisfying. I enjoy being called to get a business or home back up and running as it should," says Hudek.

### Work/Life Balance

Throughout it all, the trades have provided Hudek with a good life, a life that allows her to do things she enjoys the most. "In the summer, I love to scuba dive and swim. Right now, I get in the hot tub and I pretend I'm diving. I also enjoy being outdoors in general—hiking, kayaking and swimming. Reading is also a great respite for me; action movies are great, too."

Hudek also collects vintage Chanel handbags and buys and sells them as a hobby. She loves to dress and act as femininely as possible outside of work. "It helps me balance that part of me," says Hudek.

One last thing: when asked once about the last time she said it was a great day, "I was running a new gas service outside in the sunshine on a job with no one on site to bother me—just me, the track hoe and some Nine Inch Nails."

### **Social Connections**

Social media has introduced Hudek to more contractors, both near and far. Networking via social media has brought her mentors, introduced her to new equipment and products that have helped her business immensely, and also helped her reach more customers. You can follow Linda on Instagram @thebrunetteplumber.

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**by Patrick Linhardt** Hydronics manager at corken steel products co.



## **Trouble No More**

s I get older, I enjoy listening to the Allman Brothers. Their song, *Trouble No More*, seems especially appropriate for a recent job that the Kid and I were tag teaming. You know that kind of job that eats up your time, frustrates your efforts, and makes you sing the blues. *Someday baby, you ain't gonna trouble, poor me, anymore.* 

### It Really Wasn't a Difficult Job

That's how we were feeling after about two weeks. It really wasn't a difficult job. In fact, just a basic one pump/ two baseboard loops residential hot water replacement. Most contractors around here would be in and out in two or three days. You East Coast guys might have it done by noon on the first day. But in the Midwest/Mideast. there isn't enough demand for boilers for most contractors to have dedicated boiler install crew, so we work with a variety of skill levels.

This contractor definitely didn't have the resources on this job. The owner is a hard-working guy that has built up quite a nice company over the last 15 years or so, but doing the air side because that's most of the work around here. When he gets a hydronics job, we now insist that the Kid or I visit the job site before anything gets ordered or any work gets done.

We weren't quite to that point when this job started. Since the job was over a hundred miles away, the quote came from a series of texted photos of the boiler to be replaced. It was quoted as a top-of-the-line high efficiency model. Once they got the sale, the Kid sketched out the piping. Trouble not yet.

### Air in the System?

We delivered the boiler to the contractor and they scheduled the install. The Kid made arrangements to travel to the job site to meet the install crew to go over what needs to be done, like what pipe needs to be cut where, what stays, what goes, etc. The Kid leaves and the crew gets to work—or so it seems.

About a week later, the next contact is from one of their techs that was not on the install crew, but is now there to start up the system. He's reporting to the Kid that the boiler keeps going off on high limit and that the radiation is not getting warm. Now that is a pretty familiar observation on hot water boilers at their initial start-up and



Cut-away detail of a check valve.

high temperature. At that point the Kid asked for some texted photos of the actual installation. He noticed that the pump was installed in the fill line *after* the pressure reducing valve and *before* the fill line connected to the system. Trouble maybe?

Obviously, the pump can't circulate the water through the boiler and radiation if it is not installed in the boiler piping. Yep, we can't make this up. The

Kid told them to relocate the pump to the supply side as shown on his sketch. Well, the tech can't do that kind of work, so we wait on the install crew to get off a heat pump job. This job is eating up lots of time at the busy time of year.

### **Dumb and Dumber**

Eventually the pump gets changed, but we still have no circulation. At that point, I look at the photos of how

### You know that kind of job that eats up your time, frustrates your efforts, and makes you sing the blues?

it usually has something to do with air in the system keeping the water from circulating.

The Kid starts asking questions, like, "did you bleed the air out of the radiation". The tech wasn't sure because when he got there the install crew was gone to another job, probably a furnace. He did some searching for air vents/ bleeders but couldn't get the boiler to stay on. It was still early fall and warm enough to not need heat yet, so the tech signs off to go to another job (maybe a no cooling call).

### We Can't Make This Up

The next tech on the job—again without much hydronics experience—calls to report that he found some air bleeders in the attic, but again no circulation so the boiler keeps locking out on it was installed and spit-up my morning cup of tea. I'm a "flush and plumb" kind of guy and this was "dumb and dumber." I mean it looked horrible with pipes running at weird angles and directions. I then called the territory manager that handles that account to explain that the job would have to be re-piped and could he talk to the owner.

It was agreed that the Kid would make another trip to go over the piping changes and watch/help them get it right. That meeting didn't go exactly as planned, since the crew he met didn't have the time to stay and get the work done that day. Our frustration level is growing.

The weather is changing by now and the homeowner needs heat. The repiping supposedly gets done and the tech that day gives me a call. I ask him to purge the air out of each baseboard loop with the purge valves that are shown on the sketch. He says that they weren't installed, but that he can do that right away and call me back. Now I'm feeling the blues.

### **Light Bulb Moment**

When he calls back, he says that nothing is coming out of the open purge valves. No air and no water, which doesn't make any sense, but nothing has made much sense so far on this job. Since it is two baseboard loops, I went outside the box to ask if they could have hooked the pipes up so that the two supplies were tied together on the supply while the two returns were tied together on the return.

It actually would explain what was going on, but of course the tech that day traced the piping out and assured me it was right. He said it seemed like there was a check valve blocking the flow. That's when the light bulb went off in my head. I flashed back to a job about five years ago that fit the symptoms.

One of our other contractors without an experienced crew was having the same no circulation issues until I found that they had installed the check valve on a pump backwards. I asked the tech that day to remove the pump to see if there was a check valve installed.

I got the texted photo about ten minutes later. Sure enough, although the piping sketches didn't indicate a check valve, there it was on the discharge side of the pump, installed backwards, blocking any flow of hot water out of the boiler and any fresh water flow to purge air out of the baseboard loops. He removed the check, re-installed the pump, and purged the two loops. Trouble no more!

Patrick Linhardt is a thirty-seven-year veteran of the wholesale side of the hydronic industry who has been designing and troubleshooting steam and hot water heating systems, pumps and controls on an almost daily basis. An educator and author, he is currently Hydronic Manager at the Corken Steel Products Co.

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## Burnham Holdings Announces Changes in Executive Leadership

Burnham Holdings, Inc., (Pink Sheets: BURCA) recently announced that Douglas S. Brossman will be retiring as CEO of the Company, effective April 24, 2023, after a fifteen-year career with the company. Brossman will continue to serve as a Director of Burnham Holdings, Inc.

Christopher R. Drew, currently President and Chief Operating Officer, will become Chief Executive Officer of Burnham Holdings, Inc., effective April 24th, 2023. Mr. Drew will continue in his current role and report to Mr. Brossman until that time.

Burnham Holdings, Inc. is the parent company of numerous subsidiaries including U.S. Boiler Co., Thermal Solutions Products, and Burnham Commerical. They include leading do-



**Christopher R. Drew** 

mestic manufacturers of boilers and related HVAC products and accessories (including furnaces, radiators and com-



bined heat and power systems), for residential, commercial and industrial applications.

Christopher Drew graduated from Dartmouth College with a BA in 1989, and the New York University Stern School of Business with an MBA in 1994. He first joined Burnham Holdings, Inc. in 1989 and has served in a variety of positions during his tenure with the organization. Notably, Drew led the startup of the Thermal Solutions Products business in 1996 and has served as President of multiple Burnham Holdings' subsidiaries including Thermal Solutions Products, Burnham Commercial and US Boiler Co.

Christopher R. Drew, currently President and Chief Operating Officer, will become Chief Executive Officer.

## A. O. Smith Corporation Publishes 2022 ESG Report

MILWAUKEE, WI — Global water technology company A. O. Smith Corporation ("the Company") (NYSE: AOS) announced the release of its 2022 ESG Re-

port, which documents the company's environmental, social and governance activities, progress and performance over the past two years. This is the third ESG report released by the company in the last five years.

"While ESG concepts have long been embedded within the foundation of A. O. Smith's history—since our founding in 1874—the release of our third ESG Report further demonstrates our commitment to being a good corporate citizen and a leader in water technology and environmental stewardship efforts," said Kevin J. Wheeler, chairman, president and chief executive officer. "We are proud to remain a leading global provider of innovative and energy efficient solutions, allowing us to address the complex water-related challenges the world is facing today."



In the past year, A. O. Smith made significant strides in its commitment to ESG, including:

- Hiring ESG Director, Noelle
- Brigham, who joins A. O. Smith with 20+ years of sustainability experience in corporate environments
- Donating over \$1.6 million to 193 nonprofit community organizations in 2021 through the A. O. Smith Foundation and \$1.5 million to provide access to clean drinking water to communities in need in partnership with Good360
- Fostering its employee development program—100% of full-time salaried employees have had a documented development plan for the past three years

- Receiving the company's fourth consecutive Energy Star<sup>®</sup>
   Partner of the Year Award and second consecutive award for Sustained Excellence
- Assisting policymakers in analyzing data using a propretary tool that models energy usage, environmental impact and potential decarbonization proposals
- "With this report, we further demonstrate our commitment to be a water technology company that is continuously innovating to provide our customers with a diverse array of energy efficient solutions. We are consistently measuring and managing our own environmental footprint and aligning what we do as a business with our ESG-related goals by being good stewards of water through our involvement in the Water Council and the Water Quality Association," said Kevin Wheeler.

For more information, visit *www. aosmith.* **C** 

Drew brings extensive knowledge of the industry to the position. He has been a long-standing participant in the Air-Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) and continues to serve as an Ex-Officio member of the AHRI Board of Directors after previously serving as Treasurer and Chairman.

Burnham Holdings Inc. is also pleased to announce several other additions to its executive management team. Melissa Devitz has been promoted to Vice President of Human Resources. Paul D. Spradling has been promoted to Vice President of Operations, and Bryan O'Toole has been promoted to Vice President of Business Development.

Subsidiaries of Burnham Holdings, Inc. provide high-value, high-quality products, backed by superior service. Products are manufactured at plants in the East, South, and Midwest. Burnham Holdings, Inc. and its subsidiaries employ approximately 850 employees, over 350 of which are located in Lancaster County, PA.

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HYDRONICS & RADIANT (RPA

# All in the Family: New England Total Energy is a Multigenerational Package Deal

hey've been at it for more than 80 years. Customer service, that is. Lots of it, delivered by the truckload if their customers can handle the goodness that stems from their relationship with Cortese family-owned, Greenwich, CT-based New England Total Energy.

The company offers an array of energy services including oil, diesel and propane delivery, hydronic and HVAC installation and service as well as home energy audits; even insulation.

Founded in 1939 by Vincenzo Cortese, the family and its 60+ employees have served the needs of customers in Fairfield County, CT and Westchester,



A few New England Total Energy team members. "We're always looking for ways to grow and diversify." said Yolanda Cortese, center.

have the right character and technical aptitude, people who take pride in their work and also in providing the level of customer service that our customers have come to appreciate," continued Frank. "These are the things that contribute to and build a company's good reputation in the community. We now have so many long-term employees that they've simply become an extension of the family."

"We're in it for the long haul," added Yolanda. "We also devote a lot of time and resources to engage and train our staff. This shows *them* that it's not entirely about customer service; it's about their well-being, too. After all,



Three HTP Enduro Ti 750 MBH boilers in the mechanical room at Greenwich Catholic School.

NY areas since those early years. Frank Cortese, VP, represents the family's third generation (and, yes—there's a 4th generation moving toward industry involvement).

"We work hard—it's in our blood and we're always looking for ways to grow and diversify," said Yolanda Cortese, Frank's Mom and president of New England Total Energy. Yolanda is the widow of Demetrio Cortese; he and Yolanda represent the second generation to operate the company; Frank is the third generation.

No longer just an oil delivery company, these days New England Total Energy (NETE) strives to meet much broader customer needs and expectations. "We want to be able to offer 'the whole package' for our customers," added Frank. "So that when a need arises with mechanical or HVAC system or—better yet—to fend-off emergencies through pre-season maintenance, we're there promptly and with the tools and experience needed to meet the challenge.

Rosalie Celestino—NETE's loyal customer for three-quarters of a century—would agree. She recalls, at the age of 12, having a crush on Frank's dad ("Yolanda was *sooo* lucky!") Celestino's now 83 years young, but clearly remembers how impressed she was with Demitrio and all of his employees. "Their work ethic impressed me, so much so that when I went to work



A NETE technician checks on the new Taco SKV vertical, in-line self-sensing pumps at the Greenwich Catholic School.

at Hubba-Hubba, our family restaurant [in 1951], I wanted to work just as hard as they did.

"The family's held up their good reputation through the years," added Celestino. "They're all such great people, dedicated to their work, honest, humble and ethical in every way." You'll soon learn more from Celestino—who recalls carrying fuel oil up (a big improvement to firewood) to their second story apartment back in the 1950s.

# Employees? Well, more like family

"It requires a commitment on o ur part to stay abreast of the latest technology, and in hiring people who they're the ones who become the face of our business day and night."

NETE hires additional part-time drivers in the winter to accommodate deliveries. And, according to Frank, the company has diversified into energy auditing.

"We teach our customers how to conserve energy, even though it's going to lower the gallons of fuel we'll deliver," he explained. "For us to be an asset to customers, and a solutions provider, that's how we win and grow. Many of our customers respond favorably to the suggestion of an energy audit. It's a concept some of them have never considered."

Turn to All in the Family, page 38

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HYDRONICS & RADIANT (RP)

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# All in the Family: NETE is a Package Deal

#### Continued from page 36

According to NETE's energy auditing manager, Paul Scicchitano, the company does 400 to 500 energy audits annually. The result is that many homes are modernized in simple ways-through the use of LED lightbulbs, the addition of insulation, weatherization services and pre-season mechanical check-ups to enhance the operation and efficiency of mechanical equipment. They also offer blower door testing as an extension of the audit process. Occasionally, even more important things happen as a result; their technicians have prevented carbon monoxide leaks on more than a few occasions.

## Jeff Quickel on "family" status

Frank stopped in at a jobsite one day where several of his technicians were working on a checklist to be completed at Greenwich Catholic School. NETE had recently completed a mechanical overhaul of the substantial hydronic and mechanical systems there, an effort that required weeks of demo and installation time.

Jeff Quickel, outside sales pro with the Randolph, MA-based manufacturer's rep firm, Emerson Swan, was there to meet him. Quickel made his rounds, beginning with Frank and the rest of the crew, with high fives and backslaps. In typical New England style, it was a rather boisterous and spirited reunion.

Reggie Minor, NETE's service manager, greeted Quickel warmly. Mike Curry, a technician who does a lot of oil work (but not on this day) introduced Quickel to his son, Jack Curry who, after graduating high school, attended BOCE's. From the age of 15, Jack spent summers and some high school time trailing after Dad on the jobsite. He's an official apprentice for the company now.

Quickel then made his way to John Sandalidis, the field foreman who was making some adjustments to one of two Taco self-sensing pumps in the mechanical room. Teddy Griffin, another talented technician, greeted Quickel.

Finally, Jeff glanced at a smiling Brendan Galvin, eager to greet him back to the school. "Brendan!" said Quickel. "I see that things have gone well since I was last here." Galvin—an independent electrician for years, and prior to that a union trade pro—is Director of Facilities at the school. He's served the school in that capacity for four years and, thanks to his relationship with Quickel and NETE, they've managed to upgrade and improve a wide range of mechanical and electrical systems there.

#### It's all about reliability, energy reductions

Quickel was also there to answer questions about expansions to the mechanical work there, but he had to take time to admire the progress he saw at the jobsite. He observed NETE's flawless installation of three HTP Enduro Ti 750 MBH boilers. These are new, natural gas fired, fully-modulating and condensing heat plants that now provide space and pool heat for the school's swim facility, gym, classrooms and admin offices; each boiler is served by a CN4-1200 NeutraSafe condensate neutralizer.

Connected to and governing operation of the boilers are two Taco SKV vertical, in-line self-sensing pumps, set for lead-lag rotation. Standing between their closed-system hydronic loop, in order for heat to serve the pool, is a 1,544 MBH titanium Taco plate-and-frame heat exchanger. Moving heat to and from the heat exchanger is a 1-HP Taco 1900 Series close-coupled, in-line pump.

"The pool heater was intentionally over-sized so that the school would get a longer life out of it, and with no noticeable loss in performance or efficiency," said Quickel. "School managers made it apparent—that when heat was needed for a swim—they wanted warmth for the water as quickly as possible. Of course, this is compatible with the condensing boilers, too. We wanted to make them 'cry' as much as possible" (preferring a high  $\Delta T$  for maximum condensate/efficiency).

Also serving the space heat needs of a different wing in the facility—installed as an injection loop about 200 feet from the main mechanical room—are two Taco 00e ECM pumps, just feet away from two, still-in-place but fully-decommissioned, older pumps—part of the demo work yet to be completed.



Two Taco 00e ECM pumps serve the space heating needs of a different wing of the school.

"Jeff [Quickel] is our go-to hydronics genius and source of information for most of the products and technology we install," said Frank. Taco's at the top of that list. Taco's very supportive for us as we need them. We also attend their training, both online and in person. There's no better source of hydronics training." Frank has been to Taco's main plant in Cranston, RI, as have many of their installers.

## **Substantial jobs**

Improvements to the Greenwich Catholic School's extensive mechanical systems are just the type of challenge that NETE managers specialize in. "We have the capability and the interest to dig deeply into substantial jobs, even those with challenges that may be too complex for some mechanical contracting firms," said Frank.

Given their appetite for complex jobs, it may be a bit of surprise for some that their business mix is 10 percent commercial, and 90 percent residential. NETE's territory, geographically, extends about 40 miles in all directions from Fairfield – though not into Long Island, or Manhattan.

#### Happy customers

According to Yolanda, it's not uncommon for customers to express their pleasure with NETE. "Clearly, we're in the business to stay in business. Maintaining a happy customer base and wordof-mouth referrals go well together, and they've become a big part of how we build not only our reputation, but the business' long-term success," she said. As customer letters and emails stream in, Yolanda or Frank occasionally display these where employees can see them. Or, they may ask for the customer's permission to place them on the company website. An example came in recently from a customer in Stamford, CT:

"Over the last few months my forced air heating system was acting up. I called the service department at New England and they did everything to save [our] 27 yearold unit that was supposed to die years ago. After a while it just seemed silly to keep dumping parts into a unit that old, so I purchased a new, high efficiency furnace. John and Tom came and, under the supervision of Todd, tore out the old one and did a spectacular new installation. They even left me with an electric heater for the evening while we waited for a part that was found to be cracked. After all is said and done, the crew of guys that came did a great job for a more than fair price, and now its toasty in my office. Thanks N.E. Total Energy. I will refer you to all my home inspection clients and radio show listeners."

Another happy customer is Celestino; she's the one who, at 12 years old, was enamored with Frank's dad. "Oh, I was just a silly girl then," she says happily recalling some very good years. Back when NETE was known as Cortese Fuel Oil Company, Celestino recalls what a big improvement it was to heat their apartment with fuel oil, a much more comfortable heat—and a switch that meant she and her mother could carry fuel oil from barrels in the basement, by large container, up the stairs to be poured carefully into the new furnace.

The staff at New England Total Energy has good reason to celebrate their many years in business. As they grow the business, the staff expands. Yolanda recalls the early years when a single truck made fuel deliveries. Needless to say, the fleet of vehicles has grown, too.

"As the business grows, the one thing that we won't allow to change is the quality of customer service," said Frank. That remains intact, though when we see opportunities to improve it, you bet we will. Mom reminds us regularly that maintaining customers satisfaction is the most important aspect of our work. We're in the business of building relationships."

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2

2



# by Patti Feldman computer authority

# **Generate Leads, Manage Operations**

odernize (www.modernize. com, 888/990-6016) is a residential home services lead generator software solution, that matches homeowners looking for specialty pros in a specific geographic area with contractors enrolled in the system who work in that region. The home services performance marketing platform also includes content designed to educate homeowners on heating system types and top AC and furnace brands along with a calculator useful for their estimating of cost of an HVAC project.

## **How it Works**

Modernize provides a querying homeowner with referrals to local contractors by emailing a list of providers who might respond (or notification that none are within the area). Each qualifying contractor is immediately emailed the request and, after reviewing details of the request, can reach out to the homeowner if interested.

When the homeowner is ready to connect with the contractor(s), the homeowner lets Modernize know and Modernize alerts the contractor(s), enabling the sales team to call the homeowner to schedule an in-home sales appointment or otherwise proceed.

To help handle homeowner phone inquiries that arrive outside of regular business hours, Modernize integrates Connect (www.modernize.com/pros), an automated messaging platform (to be used in conjunction with Modernize leads that helps contractors easily follow up on phone leads that come both during business hours and when the business is not open. It immediately communicates with homeowners with an automated customizable message via text, email or phone call (autocall) via an automated immediate response of assurance that the contractor is aware and will be in touch when business re-opens. Texts and emails are fully customizable, with pre-loaded templates.

# **How the Autocall Works**

When an inquiry comes into your business, an auto call is made to you, with a welcome message saying the name of the homeowner. If you answer the call, an auto call is made to the homeowner,



A geographic display from the Modernize home services lead generator.

# Reviews of the Modernize home services lead generator, ServiceBox workflow management software and the Sentrien field service solution.

conferencing you together.

Homeowners can communicate with a contractor through Connect via their preferred method: text, email, or phone.

Contractors can send up to four follow-ups, which are triggered only if the homeowner did not engage with previous communication. If there is homeowner engagement by text, call, or email, all follow-ups pause.

**Pricing:** Modernize is offered in three tiers: small business, regional, and enterprise.

**ServiceBox** (www.getservicebox.com), 888/727-4983) is cloud-based software for managing the workflow of small to medium sized service-based businesses. Features include quoting and work orders, with the ability to add notes, checklists and photos; scheduling and dispatch utilizing a drag & drop calendar and built-in GPS to select the closest technician or team to an emergency job; a mobile app; mobile timesheets based on check in/check out of the employee on the mobile app, preventive maintenance agreements, inventory management, a customer portal through which a customer can enter service requests, and the ability to take payment in the field.

Management can schedule one time and recurring to-do's for a specific employee. Quotes to customers can show or hide price breakdowns and include attachments and a request for signature. Schedulers can track payments before setting up another job and identify customers with service agreements to prioritize appointments. Recurring maintenance contracts can be programmed to automatically selfpopulate in the scheduler/dispatcher.

## **Dispatcher Mode**

When in dispatcher mode, dropping work orders onto the calendar automatically dispatches jobsite and work order information to a tech's mobile device.

Time and material work orders can be converted into invoices with a single click. Customers can pay either directly by credit card onsite through the software's invoice email pay button or through a handheld credit card device.

An inventory module enables users to program automatic reorder points for equipment that is tracked from warehouse to office to truck to job to used status.

Report types include customer, work order, invoice, and inventory. ServiceBox integrates with QuickBooks Desktop and Online and Sage 50 Accounting (Canada).

**Pricing:** ServiceBox uses a per user/ per month pricing platform. There is free onboarding guidance for administrators and a free demo available.

**Sentrien** is a cloud-based field service management solution for commercial HVACR businesses (*www.sentriencom*, 888/682-5662) unified directly into Oracle NetSuite platform (a leading ERP accounting solution for the mid-market businesses). It provides companies the ability to manage their field operations from one central location. Suitable for companies running multiple trucks, Sentrien's unified platform automates processes, integrates field operations, and gives real-time job costing across the entire company.

The solution includes integrated scheduling and dispatch for new installations, preventative maintenance, and emergency service calls, provides warranty service metrics, and integrates customer field asset tracking for full equipment life-cycle monitoring.

Dispatchers can see the status of all jobs including unassigned, in-progress, paused, and completed. Enterprise companies can choose to auto-schedule their entire field force. Once routed, the system sends each technician their assigned jobs via IOS or Android devices and provides integrated directions to the customer site via Google or Apple maps.

Mobile entry includes job time, materials, equipment, photos, signature approval, and expense reporting. For areas without cell service, Sentrien's mobile application allows data entry when off-line.

Report types include key performance metrics, unscheduled work orders, work orders pending billing, and work orders not completed by a requested date/time. Other reports include comprehensive inventory management, technician utilization, best performers, and project profitability.

**Pricing:** Sentrien is an annual subscription based on the number of technicians and trucks (e.g. 3 or fewer technicians through multi-state companies operating hundreds of trucks). Separate purchase subscription to Oracle NetSuite required.

Patti Feldman writes articles and web content for trade magazines and manufacturers of building products. She can be reached at productpad@yahoo.com.





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# by Matt Michel MARKETING AUTHORITY

# 7 Reasons Why You Need to Grow

any plumbing contractors, especially those with smaller companies are content. They are content with the size of their companies. Growth is hard, they have concluded. It is hard to find people. It is hard to generate calls. Why bother? Thus, they are content to coast. But whether they want to admit it or not, when they are coasting they are headed downhill. Here are seven reasons why every company owner should seek growth.

# **1. Growth Protects Your Family**

The owner of a one or two-truck plumbing company often believes himself to be fiercely independent and self-reliant. In fact, he is fiercely selfish. What will happen to this company if something happens to the owner? What happens if there is a bad accident, behind the wheel or on the job that prevents the owner from working? What happens if he gets severely ill and can't work for weeks or months?

His customers will find someone else to take care of their needs. His family cannot. At the least, the company owner who is content to be small should build good medical and disability insurance into his prices to provide for his family should he be unable to work. Of course, most small company owners content with their lot do not think like this. To think like this would ultimately result in a conclusion that growth protects the family. A business that can operate without the owner is a business that can provide for the owner's family in his temporary or longer-term absence. Growth protects the family.

# 2. Growth Reduces Dependence

One of the fears of small company owners is the loss of a plumber to a competitor, usually just when work is at its peak. This is usually the time when the employee is working long hours, on-call constantly, burnt out, and getting pressure from home to do something about it. Doing something may means switching companies or it might mean holding up the owner for more money. Either seems disastrous



# Whether you want to admit it or not, when you are coasting it means you are headed downhill.

because the owner feels dependent on each plumber.

Lose one plumber in a three-truck company and a third of the productive capacity, the money-making capacity of the company is lost until a replacement can be found and brought up to speed. Lose a plumber in a ten-truck company and the lost is ten percent of the productive capacity. It hurts, but not that bad. Moreover, the ten-truck company likely has an apprentice or helper waiting in the wings.

Each time a company adds a truck and plumber, the leverage of any individual plumber is reduced. The company owner can make decisions based on the good of the company moving forward without fearing what any individual might do or how he might react. Growth reduces dependence on any individual plumber.

## **3. Growth Leads to Freedom**

Owning a small company entails a degree of freedom. If the owner wants to start late during deer season so he can get in a morning hunt, he can. If the owner wants to take off any given afternoon to go fishing, he can. But take off a week? Two weeks? This entails closing the company for the single truck operator and fear of what employees might do in his absence for the two or three-truck operator.

By contrast, the plumber who builds a business that can operate without him—because he has people in key positions with redundancies and controls to protect his interests—can leave without worry. He can take long vacations. He knows a degree of freedom the small company cannot even imagine. Growth leads to freedom.

# 4. Growth Makes Exits Possible

At the moment, many plumbing company owners are taking advantage of private equity's interest in the service trades and choosing to make lucrative exits. This is choice not available to the small company owner. He will never be able to sell, or at least, not for much. Thus, he better save and invest because when he reaches the day where his body is so broken down that he can no longer work, he will not be able to live on the proceeds from the sale of his life's work.

Buyers of small companies are purchasing customer lists because nothing else is of value. There is no value in a business that cannot exist without the owner. Buyers want businesses that can operate without the owner and in today's market, they are paying a premium for them. Plumbers who grow

their companies to the point where they are not needed for the day-to-day operations have an array of financial options available. Growth makes exits possible.

# 5. Growth is Natural

Walk into your backyard and look around. Everything is either growing or dying. This is nature. This is natural. Growth, whether in nature or business is the natural way of things. To fight it, to deny it is to deny nature itself. This is why a growing business feels right. In a stagnant business, the sense of decline is pervasive. Growth is natural.

# 6. Growth is More Fun

Visit any city or town where there is growth and a sense of vibrance and energy is everywhere. These places are fun. They are exciting. By contrast, visit a city bleeding population. The decline hangs over the town like a dark, overcast sky. It is depressing. This is not limited to municipalities. It applies to companies as well.

Growing companies have energy. New goals are being set and met and exceeded. The future is one of possibilities. Optimism is everywhere. People are excited to go to work. There is laughter in the workplace. The reason is simple: growth is more fun.

# 7. Growth Begets Growth

People are attracted to growing enterprises. These are the places where people want to work. The recruiting headaches that small company owners encounter are lessened in a growing business. The growth-oriented company is not only more attractive as a place to work, it attracts optimistic, growth-oriented people. These people lead to more growth. The growth gains inertia. Growth begets growth.

Want to grow your plumbing business? Don't do it the hard way. Use the tools and information other successful plumbing companies have passed along in the Service Roundtable. Join for just \$50 a month and gain full access to plumbing's most powerful and comprehensive crib of business tools you can use to grow your company. Learn more at www.ServiceRoundtable.com or call 877/262-3341.



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by Carol Fey TECHNICAL TRAINER AND WRITER

# Red Tag! How Did I Nearly Get My Boiler Condemned?

y boiler red tagged?! That happens to slum lords, not responsible landlords such as me. I've been teaching troubleshooting classes for years, wrote a book about it, and was a heating tech in Antarctica not that long ago. How did I nearly get my boiler condemned? It was because of my own troubleshooting. Well, truth be told, I didn't troubleshoot at all. Saving time, I skipped it and nearly had my boiler condemned.

Troubleshooting is a simple procedure never changes. It starts with three easy steps: Is there power to the unit? Is the unit turned on? If it's a gas appliance, is there gas?

Do one test at a time. Observe. Think. Don't leap to conclusions.

It couldn't be simpler! And yet . . .

When it's a hurry-up situation, and you "know" what the problem is, why waste time?

## **The Call**

I was out of town for the weekend and of course that's when my renters texted to say that when the boiler comes on, it shuts off right away. It's getting colder outside, so can I have it fixed by Monday.

I know what this is—it's a bad flame sensor. I could troubleshoot it, but I don't have replacement parts, so I gotta get a contractor to replace it.

I sent out texts to trusted contractors and got back, "I'm hunting in Wyoming for two weeks," and "Booked until next Thurs." But Ben's Plumbing and Heating said, "Bought the customer list from the guy you tried to contact. Can be there Monday."

## **Meet Josh**

Josh the service tech arrived as promised. He was new new, but I was ready to help. I offered, "In case your boss didn't tell you, I think it's the flame sensor." He didn't seem to hear.

We went to the basement. I suggested, "Want me to give you a call for heat from the thermostat? "Sure," he said, maybe to get me gone. I stomped upstairs and reset the stat. It clicked,

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I've been teaching troubleshooting classes for years, wrote a book about it, and was a heating tech in Antarctica not that long ago. How did I nearly get my boiler condemned?

and then maybe, just maybe, yes! the whoosh of the burner. Back downstairs, I excitedly asked, "What did you find?" Josh was just getting off his phone.

"Well, I turned on the valve on the gas pipe outside the boiler, and then the burner lit."

"Wait—how did THAT get turned off?"

This is where the trouble started. "Well, my boss said you said the gas company turned it off. So maybe I gotta shut down the whole thing because of safety." Pause. "Why did the gas company turn it off?"

"Whoa," I groaned, "The gas company was never here," knowing that a gas company shut down is a super-big deal and that he's thinking of condemning my boiler—because I didn't find that turned-off valve myself. I have a big misunderstanding to straightened out with this guy's boss. Suddenly I'm in boiler-survival mode.

"The gas company was never here. A renter must have turned it off for the summer. And you fixed it. Yay! That's great. Let me just pay you for this service call, and get you on your way." "Well, my boss says I gotta do tests to be sure it's safe. And, I see a red tag inside the boiler."

#### **Red Tag**

"RED TAG!" screamed the voice inside my head! A red tag is death for a boiler. There can't be a red tag.

Sure enough, Josh pulled a small ragged red tag from inside the boiler.

"Please let me see that," I nearly begged. I read the tag aloud to him. "It says, 'do not operate unit on LP gas (propane) unless properly converted with a factory-supplied kit by a qualified contractor.' So everything's OK. He gave me a blank look.

I continued, "Whoever installed it a long time ago was supposed to remove the tag." Still a blank look.

I tried again. "The tag's about propane. We don't have propane. We have natural gas." Clearly, I was speaking a foreign language.

"Well," Josh said, "all I know is that if the gas company shut off the gas and there's a red tag..."

"Hold on," I tried to be calm. "How 'bout you go ahead and finish your safety tests while I call your boss and see if I can clear this up." Upstairs, I called Ben the boss. Thank goodness he answered his phone.

# **Straightening Things Out**

"Ben," I said, "you don't know me yet, but I'm the customer where Josh is. He thinks the gas company shut off the gas, but they didn't. They were never here."

"Well, someone called in the gas company shut to off the gas there."

I tried another tack. "Ben, I'm so embarrassed. I teach troubleshooting at tech schools. You know how it is when you leap to a conclusion instead of doing the troubleshooting process? That's what I did. I called you because I thought I had a bad sensor. But really the problem was that a renter turned off the gas the boiler for the summer." Pause. "Nope, no idea why someone would do that." Pause. "What do I want from you? If Josh would just let me pay him and get on to his next service call... Yep. I understand he has to do the tests. Yep. I'm happy he's making sure everything's safe. The red tag? Yeh. it said to use a conversion kit with LP. You know what I'm talking about, right? Yep, I'll make sure that tag gets thrown away."

# **Not a Bad Price**

Back in the basement, Josh was packing up his tools. I grabbed the red tag from the floor and shoved it into my pocket.

Josh was saying into his phone, "Okay boss, everything tested okay. No carbon monoxide. No gas leaks..."

Whew!! What a joy to hear.

"Josh, you've been great. I talked to your boss and he's okay. Looks like the boiler is running fine. Let's go outside and get you paid."

\$145—not a bad price for a reminder not to skip the troubleshooting procedure.

Carol Fey is a technical trainer and writer, specializing in easy electricity, hydronics and troubleshooting books. She also writes about HVAC work in Antarctica.



by Oscar Collins Editor-IN-CHIEF AT MODDED

# 8 Seasonal Opportunities for Contractors

VAC and plumbing contractors' work is highly seasonal. As the colder months approach, some professionals may find that their demand drops with the temperatures. It's helpful to anticipate and adapt to slow seasons, but there are still opportunities to capitalize in fall and winter.

Contractors can survive and thrive during the typical off-season if they know what to look for. In that spirit, here's a glance at eight seasonal opportunities for contractors during the fall and winter.

A good place to start when looking for seasonal opportunities is within contractors' areas of expertise. Overall demand may decline, but some specific jobs can see an uptick in fall and winter, especially if they are marketed sufficiently.

# 1. Winterization

Winterization is one of the best seasonal demands to capitalize on for plumbing and HVAC contractors. Buildings may need changes and upgrades to avoid costly damage as the weather gets colder. Texas's 2021 winter storm saw 320 plumbers renew their licenses within four days of the record-low temperatures. Not every winter will bring such a surge in repair demand, but that highlights how important winterization can be.

Start marketing winterization services in early fall before the weather gets too cold but keep offering this work throughout the winter. It'll help to emphasize the cost savings compared to larger repairs from burst pipes and broken heating systems.

# 2. Pipe and HVAC Maintenance

Similarly, contractors can transition to focus more on maintenance services rather than new installations. Construction tends to slow down in late fall and winter, so finding new projects may take time and effort. However, preventive maintenance is always relevant, and the changing seasons are an excellent time to perform it.



Contractors can survive and thrive during the typical off-season if they know what to look for.

Like winterization, the key here may be marketing, as many clients, especially in the residential sector, may need help understanding the need for preventive repairs. Communicate how ongoing maintenance before things go wrong will help save money and improve comfort. These jobs may be smaller than installations or more dramatic maintenance, but they can be more consistent as they don't rely on outside events.

## 3. Sewage Inspections

Inspections are another seasonal opportunity to pursue during the fall and winter. Many homeowners understand basic repairs like fixing a running toilet, but proper sewage inspections require a professional. Changing temperatures and the holiday season make issues like freezing, clogging and flooding more likely, so year-end and near-spring are ideal for these checkups.

Sump pumps and drainage systems require particular attention around this time of year. Water heaters and main valves may also need checking before the weather shifts too dramatically. Some families might also go on vacation around the holidays, presenting a great opportunity to perform these inspections.

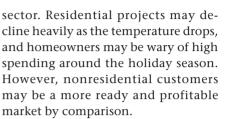
## 4. Discounted Upgrades

Maintenance and repair jobs may be more consistently available, but installing new equipment is often more profitable. Demand for new installations may fall during the colder months, but contractors can still target them through upgrades. Offering to upgrade HVAC or plumbing systems, especially at a discount, can help move inventory and boost revenue during the slower seasons.

HVAC demand typically peaks in the spring and summer, so upgrading systems before those seasons come helps customers prevent issues at inconvenient times. Discounting these services around the holidays can help convince homeowners and businesses to go through with them.

# **5. Nonresidential Work**

Some contractors may also find success by targeting a different



Commercial construction may have more opportunities for plumbing and HVAC contractors than the residential sector due to larger backlogs. Similarly, businesses may more readily understand the value of preventive maintenance and similar long-term savings, making them a better market for these services. Commercial buildings may also have more strain on their plumbing and HVAC systems during the winter, requiring more repairs and upgrades.

# Seasonal Opportunities for Diversification

Contractors can also take slow seasons as an opportunity to diversify their business. Amid rising competition with dropping demand, diversification can expand customer bases to help sustain businesses through economic uncertainty. Here are some ideas for branching out in the fall and winter.

# **1. Land Clearing**

Landscaping may seem entirely removed from plumbing and HVAC work at first, but it's more closely related than initially thought. Roots can interfere with pipe systems, improperly planted vegetation can block access points and valves, and soil degradation increases flooding risks. Adding land-clearing services to a contractor's repertoire can help make the business more well-rounded.

Fall is an ideal time for land clearing, as equipment doesn't tear frozen ground as easily, minimizing damage. It's also good to clear branches and other hazards before snowfall. Offering these services may require new equipment and reskilling, but they can help keep business going through slower months.

Turn to 8 Seasonal, page 60



# by Ro Bhatia **CEO. PLANHUB**



# Digital Tools - a Contractor's Best Hedge Against Economic Uncertainty

ising inflation continues to cause major problems across our economy, and the construction industry. Contractors-and subcontractors in particular-have borne the brunt of higher costs and uncertainty.

- Overall inflation is sending prices of essentials sky-high, from food to fuel to office supplies and rent
- Supply chain issues continue to crank up material costs
- Critical construction materials rose dramatically during the pandemic and beyond
- Fear of a potential recession in 2023 brings additional business challenges

The way construction industry professionals strategize overcoming these financial hurdles could mean the difference between business success, or a difficult path ahead.

## Inflation's Effects on the Industry

The ever-rising prices of labor, material, fuel, and maintenance are weighing heavily on the backs of contractors and subcontractors. Supply chains were sent into turmoil by the pandemic, the U.S. home building boom exhausted available lumber, and now increasing interest rates are stretching construction budgets thin.

Contractors and subtractors are forced to grapple with high material costs, a severe skilled labor shortage, and continued supply chain troubles that hike up costs and set back projects. For example, steel, a crucial component of data center construction, saw substantial fluctuations in price, soaring over 200% from March 2020 to mid-2021, before finally letting up this summer. Other critical inputs have also risen. In fact, the cost of key construction materials is up 16% from a year ago and 41% since the start of the pandemic. Although the industry has seen a decrease in supply chain bottlenecks, contractors and subcontractors continue to endure severe material cost challenges.



# Innovative, simple-to-use preconstruction technology can enhance control and productivity.

Yet another industry hurdle is the steady escalation in fuel prices. For a subcontractor with a small fleet of 3 Ford F-150s, at \$3.70 a gallon (the current national average), simply filling up those tanks twice a week could lead to over \$2,000 a month in fuel expenses paid out of pocket. In California, the Pacific Northwest, and across the eastern seaboard, fuel costs can be up to 35% higher.

Soaring diesel prices are an even greater concern for an industry reliant on heavy equipment. Earlier this year, diesel costs rose 33% in only five weeks, sending prices skyrocketing to an all-time high of \$5.78 per gallon in June. According to EIA, diesel p rices have jumped 141% since the pandemic began..

Materials make up about 35% to 60% of the overall construction cost. In the last three years, inflation has triggered a record-breaking jump in the cost of construction projects while simultaneously creating new risk management obstacles for contractors. While the construction industry withstood the pandemic's economic slowdown better than most industries, construction professionals still face significant barriers to success.

Due to the nature of the industry, inflation is extremely damaging to contractors and subcontractors. It creates cash flow management issues, longer production timelines, reduces sales volume, and fuels other construction operations challenges.

On most construction projects, contractors and subcontractors must procure materials in advance and are expected to pay for those building materials within 30-60 days after purchase, well before they are paid for the job. Holes in those budgets will only continue to grow as costs rise. Contractors and subcontractors are then in jeopardy of losing out on bids and potential contracts as the cash flow necessary to float projects simply is not there.

The \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan, widely accredited as

a life raft for construction, has paradoxically created other issues for the industry. Having available funding for large-scale new projects is increasing demand for already scarce materials, contributing to existing inflationary pressures. Basic economic principles tell us that adding more dollars to solve a goods shortage is a quick and easy recipe for even higher inflation. Without concrete steps to help mitigate material and energy costs, prices will only continue trending upward, and contractors and subcontractors will continue to face slim margins. It's clear to see that snowballing costs have damaging effects on the bottom line, encourage delays in construction, limit a project's upside rate of return, and can potentially scrap projects entirely.

# **Technology Can Mitigate** Inflation's Impact

Experts do not believe rising inflation and uncertainty will ease much in 2023. So how are contractors and subcontractors supposed to secure new projects while material price volatility could cause a project to become unprofitable?

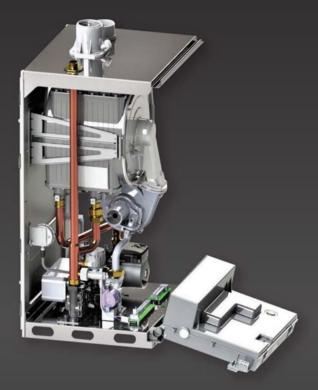
First, construction professionals must focus on finding solutions for what is within their control. Thankfully, innovative, simple-to-use preconstruction technology can enhance control and productivity. These platforms improve planning, increase efficiency and help general contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers collaborate more easily to establish long-lasting connections that enhance stability and success.

Preconstruction, the crucial first phase of any project, is used to create strategic project plans, including design plans, verify vendor qualification, source materials and labor, and establish communication with owners. The most effective digital tools connect all preconstruction information in one place, bringing contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers Turn to Digital Tools page 60





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# Ron the Sewer Rat Implements Fleet Tech to Improve Operations

Ron the Sewer Rat might sound like a one-man show, but the Twin Cities-based plumbing contractor has been steadily expanding for 50 years. While there was once originally a real Ron running the show, the team has grown from a few subcontractors to a whole team of technicians, and their fleet of vans has grown with them to just under 30 total assets.

# **Trapped in 1972**

But despite the company's overall advancement, a lot of their internal processes stayed trapped in 1972, especially their fleet management and maintenance procedures. Owner Peter Kroening said that he and his co-owners were proud to build on the legacy and reputation of Ron the Sewer Rat, but their disorganized paper-based fleet management system needed some desperate updates if they were going to keep pushing forward.

"Not even a filing cabinet—it was just papers," Kroening said. "And it's kinda rotated who's been in charge of it. It's been a problem since day one, though not as noticeable with only a few vans going. As we continue to grow, it's become more and more kind of a problem, slowly creeping up our list of to-dos."

The problem was especially prevalent in their fleet's maintenance. Ron the Sewer Rat outsources their maintenance to a third-party mechanic, and the breakdown in their paper system became more noticeable as their technician began to notice missing inspection items that could have pointed to mechanical issues well ahead of time.

"We had created kind of an in-house maintenance checklist for when our maintenance tech showed up," Kroening said. "[Our techs] kind of had to go through this checklist and we were noticing that they were needing repairs or maintenance issues done and not telling us until it was too late. So we were missing some items."



Kroening decided it was time to put a more modern solution in place to ensure that their maintenance was being approached proactively.

Ron the Sewer Rat is transitioning their fleet maintenance management from their traditional paper forms and checklists to a modern fleet management software.

# Give the Technicians an Easier Route

Kroening decided it was time to put a more modern solution in place to ensure that their maintenance was being approached proactively. Ron the Sewer Rat is now in the process of transitioning their fleet maintenance management from their traditional paper forms and checklists to a modern fleet management software, which allows them to automate a lot of their maintenance processes and give their technicians an easier route to complete daily vehicle inspection reports thoroughly and accurately.

While the issues Ron the Sewer Rat was facing were detrimental to their fleet operations, Kroening says it was also understandable. Their paper trail made it difficult to keep up with inspections and reports, and didn't exactly prioritize efficiency or ease of use, which can get in the way of any technician's day-to-day work.

"So I think, as a technician in the field, you wanna get home and you want simplicity and you don't wanna call an office, right?" Kroening said. "They get crabby, they get frustrated, they get whatever. And you kind of take some of that too. So I think [techs] leave things out intentionally. So I think a system where they can just say, 'Hey, I need maintenance', and they click a button—I think that we actually stay on top of things better."

# **Procurement and Disposal**

Staying on top of things, as Kroening puts it, doesn't just benefit maintenance processes. One of the trickiest parts of managing a fleet—especially for companies whose fleets are a more



adjacent part of their function—is vehicle procurement and disposal, and Ron the Sewer Rat had been feeling the effects of a recent poorly managed acquisition due to a lack of service history.

"We bought a van from another company that was three years old, and [the seller] said, 'Yeah, I did all my oil changes. I did everything. It's all good. I brought it to the dealership I bought it from," Kroening said. "Well, we've done our oil changes since and now they're sludged in the engine. So we're going through a warranty issue. [The manufacturer] is saying they're not gonna cover the engine, and it was like, man, see? If any vehicle we sell, we can just be like, 'Here's all the maintenance done, no worries, everything's taken care of,' and not allow them to get to that point—I think those issues do come up and they do happen, but it's nice to avoid them."

## Implementation

In the past, Ron the Sewer Rat has often hit roadblocks when trying to get new software rolled out. "We've used a few different software companies now for different things," Kroening said. By selecting a software that fits their fleet, they are able to get up and running faster than in previous implementations. "We [typically] set these goals or deadlines and when we get into it, we realize we're a lot farther away than what we thought... I walked in this morning and I asked [my office manager], 'Hey, I think we've got our employee meeting coming up, are we good? And he's like, 'Yeah, honestly, it's, it's all set up.' It's been a nice process."

Ron the Sewer Rat is still in the process of fully implementing Fleetio, their fleet software, but choosing the right provider has made a huge difference, taking the intimidation factor out of new tech implementation.

Peyton Panik is a content marketing specialist for Fleetio, a fleet management software company that helps organizations track, analyze and improve their fleet operations. For more info, visit fleetio.com.



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# **DOL to Fund \$90M in Skills Training**

WASHINGTON, DC – To help remove academic and training barriers faced by young people, the U.S. Department of Labor today announced a \$90 million funding opportunity in YouthBuild Program grants to support pre-apprenticeships in high-demand industries including construction, healthcare, information technology and hospitality.

Grants will support occupational skills training, employment services and educational guidance to disad-vantaged young people, from ages 16 to 24, in communities where barriers to basic academic and career skills development exist.

Administered by the department's Employment and Training Administration,

and supported by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the grants will fund approximately 75 projects nationwide with individual grants the Biden-Harris administration's Justice40 initiative, which aims to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to

# Pre-apprenticeship program helps disadvantaged young people overcome barriers.

ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.5 million. The funding opportunity follows the department's 2021 guidance that prioritizes quality jobs, green building and community violence intervention.

In August 2022, the department added the YouthBuild program to

disadvantaged communities that are overburdened by pollution.

YouthBuild grants have enabled program participants to support initiatives in construction, technology and the care economy such as the following:

# SupplyHouse.com Provides \$75,000 to Support Skilled Trades

FALLS CHURCH, VA – SupplyHouse. com, a leading e-commerce supplier for the heating, plumbing, HVAC, and electrical trades, is making a \$75,000 contribution to the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association (PHCC) and the PHCC Educational Foundation in support of training and workforce development projects.

SupplyHouse.com pledged to donate \$2 for every engagement on their Trade Tuesday social media posts in November. A powerful response from their online community prompted the company to set their pledge at \$75,000, a \$15,000 increase over their 2021 gift.

"We're thrilled that our community on social media is as enthusiastic about supporting the trades as we are," said SupplyHouse.com CMO Mitch Harris. "We're grateful to be able to give back and show our appreciation to such a vital industry. Making this contribution to PHCC is especially meaningful to us because of our shared commitment to support the future of the trades."

The \$75,000 *SupplyHouse.com* gift will support several PHCC educational initiatives with the goals of:

• Educating the public of the

# SupplyHouse.com

opportunities in the trades at the PHCC—National Association's workforce development website *phccareers.org.* 

- Providing Foundation scholarships to apprentices and college students pursuing studies directly related to the plumbing-heating-cooling industry.
- Removing barriers for new e ntrants to explore industry careers in the PHCC Educational Foundation's Plumbing and HVAC Workforce Readiness Course.
- Providing business owners with affordable introductory training for new hires with the existing Plumbing Pre-Apprentice Course and an HVAC Pre-Apprentice Course scheduled for release in late 2023.
- Powering the development of the Foundation's upcoming Fast Track to HVAC Service Course, designed to help get an HVAC technician

trained in 12 to 18 months. Additionally, an allocation to the Foundation's Invest in Your Future annual giving campaign will support a wide variety of workforce development initiatives, including Foundation foremen and project manager workshops and apprentice competitions.

"It's absolutely an incredible gift from SupplyHouse.com," said Foundation Chairman Kevin Tindall, of Tindall and Ranson Plumbing in Windsor, N.J. "They told us that they want to support the skilled trades—getting people in and then helping them to be successful in their careers. That is a perfect fit with us, because that is what the Foundation is working on every single day. The SupplyHouse.com gift will really help to build these great training programs and make them affordable for people to use."

Information on the Foundation's training and educational programs can be found at *https://phccfoundation.org*.



In Madison, Wisconsin, Operation Fresh Start provides mental health counseling to all YouthBuild program participants. Through a partnership with the metropolitan school district, participants are also eligible to earn a high school diploma. OFS provides workplace skills training in construction and forestry, career counseling and a stipend for living expenses while in the program. Upon completion, participants also earn an AmeriCorps education award.

North Brooklyn YouthBuild in New York offers training in construction and healthcare with a range of credentials available to participants. Participants in the construction pathway build three affordable housing units for the community and earn certifications in green construction and other programs.

Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc. serves a rural community in Bemidji, Minnesota. By partnering with entities such as Evergreen Youth and Family Services, the local juvenile justice system, and Bemidji State University, BI-CAP provides individual instruction so participants work at their own pace to achieve competencies.

In Denver, Mile High Youth Corps trains youth to earn the Home Builders Institute's Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training Core Curriculum certification and PACT Green Building certification. Through a partnership with the Community College of Denver, MHYC's Health & Wellness track prepares young people for careers in the nursing industry.

To learn more about grant eligibility and apply, visit *www.grants.gov*.

# 4 Key Drivers That Enhance the Value of Your Business

#### Continued from page 24

Year-round end markets or a portfolio of end markets that balance out seasonality are key to achieving significant acquirer interest and premium valuations. Broadly speaking, cyclical and seasonal end markets also introduce more risk and decrease predictability in revenue forecasts-negatively impacting the value of a business.

# 4. A Compelling Story

Serial MEP acquirers see a multitude of acquisition opportunities each year and identifying opportunities that are "must have" can get lost in the shuffle if not appropriately positioned. When taking a business to market, acquirers want to know "the story" or the elevator pitch.

Financial advisory firms such as GLC Advisors have a demonstrated ability to bring to light MEP clients' acquisition highlights to acquirers' attention that are often overlooked without financial advisory counsel.

Examples of highlights our team has demonstrated in the market (that would typically be overlooked without an advisor) include: i) significant customer concentration that actually demonstrated highly loyal, blue chip customers that were re-occurring; ii) strong, long-term profit margins translated into pricing power and attributed to a top regional market share, as well as the only MEP services provider to take on the region's largest projects; iii) higher than peer profit margins were the result of in-house self-perform teams that providing ongoing contracted maintenance services in addition to project-based revenue.

As owners and leaders of MEP companies consider taking their business to market, it is critical to consider not only the impact these drivers will have on the success of an outcome but also the support a financial advisory firm such as GLC Advisors can provide to sellers to achieve the best possible outcome.

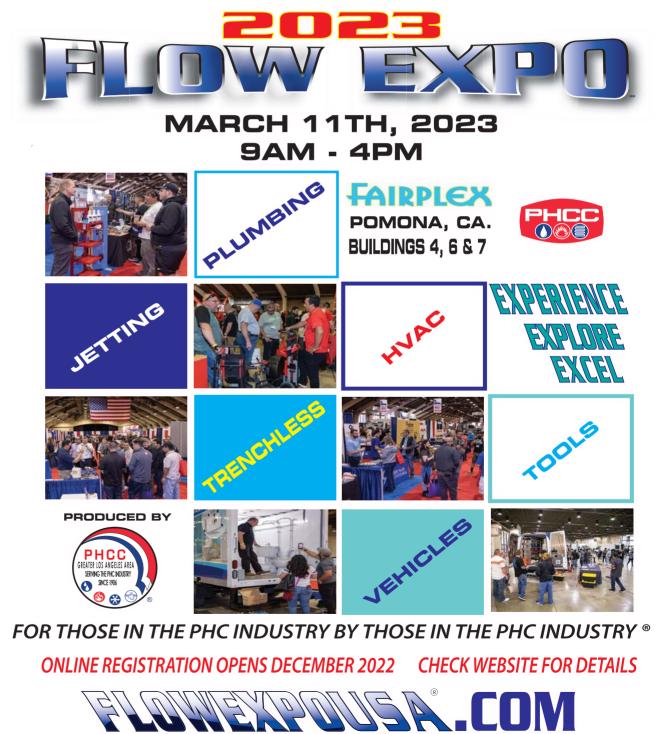
Michael Richter is a Managing Director and Co-Head of the Business Services and Industrials Team at GLC Advisors. Michael has dedicated his career to advising business owners across a wide range of

industries on mergers, acquisitions, debt and equity financings and strategic advisory assignments. His passion for assisting entrepreneurs has led to the highest standard for providing hands-on, senior level advice, which has resulted in the ability to consistently achieve outlier results.

and Co-Head of the Business Services and Industrials Team at GLC Advisors. Adam has over two decades of transactional experience ranging from mergers and acquisitions to private capital raises for various middle market compa-

Adam Fiedor is a Managing Director nies. He is a strategic advisor to entrepreneurs and management teams with a demonstrated history of creating value to all stakeholders. He is passionate for assisting entrepreneurs in navigating the complexities of M&A and capital markets.

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The FLOW EXPO is a NON-PROFIT trade show serving the construction industry and produced by the PHCC of the Greater Los Angeles Area.

# **RIDGID Celebrates 100th Anniversary**

ELYRIA, OH – RIDGID®, a part of Emerson's professional tools portfolio, is celebrating a major milestone this year: 100 years of designing and building innovative tools trusted on jobsites around the world and handed down from generation to generation. To commemorate the occasion, RIDGID will spend the year 2023 celebrating the trades, their impact on our world, and the brand's legacy.

"A lot has changed over the past century, but one thing that has remained constant is the dedication of the skilled trades to build a stronger tomorrow. RIDGID is honored to be by their side every step of the way," said Heather McLin, vice-president of marketing, professional tools for Emerson. "From our iconic pipe wrench that started it all to our newest tool solutions, every product we make is designed to help trade professionals get jobs done easier and more efficiently. That's a legacy that will never change."

#### Where It All Started – The RIDGID Wrench

In 1923, the Ridge Tool Company invented the modern straight pipe wrench, introducing it to the world under their brand RIDGID. Since then, every step forward has been with the tradesperson in mind. Today, RIDGID's pipe wrench design is the best-selling pipe wrench in the world and many of the wrenches that were sold back in the 1920s and 30s are still in use today.

The RIDGID commitment to quality has never wavered, RIDGID's signature red heavy-duty straight pipe wrench bodies are still cast at its ductile iron factory in Erie, PA, assembled at its headquarters in Elyria, OH, and then shipped from its distribution facility in Cambridge, OH.

Along with these locations, RIDGID has grown over the past century with global facilities that help keep up with demand from around the world. The company's product line has also grown. RIDGID launched power threading solutions in 1948; drain cleaning equipment in 1967; press tools in 1999 and most recently, pipe patching last year as it continues its proud tradition of innovation.



BUILT FOR WHAT'S NEXT



Manufacturing the iconic RIDGID pipe wrench.



The RIDGID manufacturing facility in Elyria, OH.

Now, more than 100 patents and 100 years later, RIDGID continues to deliver purpose-built tools that are known around the world for their ability to complete jobs more quickly and reliably. They currently offer more than 300 tools for the plumbing, mechanical and HVAC professional.

## **Trusted by the Trades**

From specialty pipe wrenches and drain cleaning equipment to pipe inspection and press solutions, each tool that carries the RIDGID name is designed and crafted for strength, effectiveness and legacy. Whether it is used for clearing a drain line at someone's home, keeping a hospital up-and-running by repairing a pipe with a press tool, or installing pipe for a new commercial build, trade professionals rely on RIDGID tools to help them build and maintain infrastructure around the world.

Looking to the future, RIDGID remains dedicated to the trades and to building the tools of performance skilled trade work demands.

"Our first hundred years is just the beginning," said Becky Brotherton, director of engagement marketing, RIDGID for Emerson. "From day one, RIDGID has had a dedicated team that strives for best in quality, product innovations, technical support and customer service. We are committed to the professionals using our tools as well as the future of the trades. There's a reason why RIDGID has been trusted by the trades for 100 years and why they will be for the next 100 years too."

# **Built for What's Next**

The company recently introduced a pipe patching kit, a new product category for the brand, and are also set to introduce additional new tools this year. Each reflect the forward thinking of the brand and their commitment to meeting the needs of current and future customers.

RIDGID is also involved in extensive efforts across several workforce development initiatives. They offer continuing education and hands-on training for plumbers, along with supporting scholarships and apprenticeships with several national organizations including SkillsUSA, The Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Educational Foundation, and the Mechanical Contractors Association of America.

In recognition of its milestone anniversary, RIDGID will be holding giveaways of commemorative anniversary wrenches and other brand swag throughout the year. Early this year they will also be launching "RIDGID Wrenched 100," a specialty beer developed in collaboration with Unplugged Brewing Company located less than a mile away from RIDGID headquarters in Elyria. In addition, the company will host commemorative events at major trade shows.

To learn more, individuals are invited to visit *RIDGID.com/100* or their social channels - *@RIDGIDTools* on Facebook, *@RIDGIDTools* on Instagram, and *@RIDGIDTools* on TikTok.

Emerson's professional tools business, which includes RIDGID as well as the Greenlee<sup>®</sup> and Klauke<sup>®</sup> brands, provides the industry's broadest portfolio of advanced, reliable tools and technologies for the mechanical, electrical and plumbing trades globally. Visit *emerson.com/professionaltools* for more information.

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# BOOTH B255



# **NKBA Announces 2023 Board of Directors**

#### Continued from page 1

"As NKBA helps to drive the kitchen and bath industry forward in North America as well as establish a global presence, we're very pleased to welcome Jan Heck as our new board chair," said Bill Darcy, NKBA CEO. "Jan and several of our current board members have first-hand experience in the international market, which is invaluable to the NKBA as we continue to grow around the world."

#### **NKBA Board Officers**

In addition to Heck, Kristen Elder, Vice President of Residential Builder & Showrooms, Ferguson Enterprises, has been elected Vice Chair, and Ken Williams, President and CEO of Caesarstone North America, was named Board Secretary/ Treasurer.

Newly elected 2023 board members include Eduardo Cosentino, EVP Cosentino Group & CEO of Cosentino America, and Kerrie Kelly, CEO & Creative Director of Kerrie Kelly Design Lab. Both are slated to serve four-year terms.

"Having served on NKBA's board for the past few years, I am truly honored to take on the Chair role," said Jan Heck, President and CEO of Miele USA. "The NKBA has accomplished many great achievements and I hope to encourage many more. As the Chair, I will do my best to ensure that the Board, as a whole, plays a full and constructive part in the development and determination of the National Kitchen & Bath's strategy and overall objectives."

Basil Larkin, Senior Vice President of Sales at Hestan Commercial Corp., and Jan Neiges, CMKBD, Principal of Jan Neiges CKD LLC have both completed their four-year terms and will depart the board at the close of 2022.

Below is the complete list of the 2023 NKBA Board Members, whose tenure begins on January 1, 2023.

#### **2023 NKBA BOARD OFFICERS**

**Jan Heck, Chair**—*President & CEO, Miele USA, Princeton, NJ* 

Named President and CEO of Miele USA in 2016, Jan Heck oversees US operations and sales growth, for the largest family-owned German appliance manufacturer, to ensure the company maintains the status as the leading premium appliance brand. In his responsibilities, he oversees business with a national network of premium appliances retailers and trade partners, and the management of 10 Miele Experience Centers throughout the US. Prior to his US leadership, Jan Heck assumed the role of President of Miele Canada in April 1999. During his tenure, the company became the leading appliance brand in Canada and had grown sales by more than 400%. Previous to Miele, Jan Heck had multiple leadership roles including President of Bizerba Canada and Thorn Stevenson Kellogg Management Consultants.

# 2023 NKBA BOARD MEMBERS

**Mikael Åkerberg**—Chairman & CEO, nobilia North America, Miami, FL

Åkerberg, who has been CEO of nobilia North America since 2017, has over 20 years of experience as an international executive supplying products and services to the construction and remodeling market. At nobilia, he has focused on building sales and expanding logistics to fulfill the demands of the retail and wholesale markets as well as the

Jan Heck, President & CEO of Miele USA, elected Board Chair.

Managing Director of Bizerba UK. He is also the chairman of the board of the German American Chamber Commerce New York.

#### **Kristen Elder, Vice Chair**—Vice President of Residential Builder & Showrooms at Ferguson Enterprises, Newport News, VA

An accomplished consumer product sales and marketing leader, Elder joined Ferguson in 2019 as Senior Director of Appliance Business Development. Elder, currently responsible for showroom and builder strategy and execution, has worked closely with the business groups, sourcing, category management, marketing, and the branch network to boost the sales and profitability of Ferguson's appliance business. Before joining Ferguson, she spent 20 years in the retail industry.

#### Ken Williams, Secretary/ Treasurer—President & CEO,

Caesarstone North America, Charlotte, NC Williams joined the company in 2016 as president of Caesarstone Canada, before being promoted in 2019 to the president of Caesarstone North America, a newly created region that combined the U.S. and Canadian operations. Previously, he held various senior executive-level positions, including Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing in several Masco Corporation divisions and general management roles at Fortune Brands, Redhill Company Ltd., and construction industry in multiple countries. Prior to joining nobilia, Europe's leading Kitchen manufacturer based in Gutersloh, Germany, Åkerberg held executive positions at Saint-Gobain S.A. and Jeld-Wen Inc.

#### **Eduardo Cosentino**—*EVP Cosentino Group & CEO, Cosentino America, Miami, FL*

In his current position, Cosentino oversees global sales efforts, using his multicultural background and sales experience to drive the company's product design and R&D forward. In 2010, he expanded his role at the company to include CEO of Cosentino's North American operations, responsible for growth in one of its biggest markets. Cosentino is also a member of Cosentino's Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and Company Board. Since 2002, he has been vice president of the Andalusian Marble Association.

#### **Kerrie Kelly**—*CEO* + *Creative Director, Kerrie Kelly Design Lab, Sacramento, CA*

Kelly is an award-winning and nationally recognized interior designer whose work elevates everyday design, bridging the gap between design principles and life well lived. An author, product designer and multimedia consultant, Kelly is also an NKBA Global Connect Advisor. In addition, she is a Fellow, Design Luminary Award recipient and Past-Chair to the National Board for American Society of Interior Designers (ASID); a Houzz Advisory Board Member; and a Zillow Interior Design National Spokesperson.

#### **Louis M. "Lou" Rohl**—*Chair and Founder, The House of ROHL, Irvine, CA*

Before retiring in February 2022, Rohl served as The House of ROHL's strategic thought leader in the U.S. and was responsible for relationships with key vendors and customers. Rohl started his career nearly four decades ago, working at St. Charles Kitchens in St. Charles, IL., and at KWC Faucets in Switzerland before becoming a founding member of ROHL. He is an industry partner at the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), an Interior Design Continuing Education Credited (IDCEC) Instructor, and a member of the executive coaching organization, Vistage International.

**Ken Roberts**—President, Delta Faucet Company, Indianapolis, IN

Promoted to President in 2018, Roberts has been with Delta Faucet Company for 22 years. Prior to his current position, he had been President of Masco Canada. Roberts has held a variety of leadership positions at Delta Faucet Company in sales, international business development, manufacturing, engineering, forecasting, purchasing and logistics. He also spent three years overseas developing Delta Faucet Company's China operations.

**Randy Warner**—Vice President of Sales, LG Electronics, Englewood Cliffs, NJ

After leading the sales team for both Signature Kitchen Suite and LG Builder, Warner was promoted in May 2022 to Vice President of Sales for LG Electronics. Previously, he was Vice President of Sales for the Luxury Division of Samsung where he successfully integrated the Dacor brand into the parent company. An Ohio native with three decades of experience in appliances, Warner began his career at Maytag where he worked for 15 years in sales and sales management roles in the U.S. He then joined Electrolux where he launched and oversaw the West Coast Builder Division as well as managed the National Buying Groups. Afterward, he was named president of distribution of the West and Southwest for Sub-Zero.

For more information, visit www. *nkba.org* 

# NEW EBOOK FROM CONTRACTOR

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTOR

The workforce crisis is as bad as it has ever been. Call it a perfect storm: older workers retiring, younger people choosing not to enter the trades, and a tight labor market that has contracting firms fighting tooth-and-nail to find and keep the existing skilled hands.

Here is a selection of 5 articles that will help you navigate this labor turbulence and enable you to develop and maintain your 21st century workforce.

# LIBRARY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



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# NOW WHAT PLUMBERS DO VOMEN IN THE MECHANIC

https://www.contractormag.com/learning-resources/whitepapers/ whitepaper/21120429/ebook-workforce-development



# Ingrao Represents PHCC–NA at Contractor Association Executive Director Input Meeting

Federated Insurance® welcomed fourteen Executive Directors of the nation's influential contractor industry associations to an input meeting on November 14-15, 2022. Chief Executive Officer Mark Ingrao represented the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors– National Association (PHCC) at this event and shared his thoughts on the current challenges and opportunities for PHCC members.

Six PHCC chapter executives also participated, providing input from their geographic areas: Jeff Beiriger, PHCC of Wisconsin; Brenda Dant, PHCC of Indiana; Joyce Frank, PHCC of Ohio; Mike McGraw, PHCC of Pennsylvania; Gina Scumaci, PHCC of Connecticut; and Tracy Threlfall, PHCC of California. Other construction trade associations also were represented.

The group shared insight into how member businesses are navigating challenges and how they benefit from specialized insurance coverages and risk management solutions for contractors. Throughout the session, attendees praised many of t he services Federated offers member clients, such as:

- Employee safety training found in the mySHIELD® online client portal, as well as the certificate management, drivers lists, and vendor resources.
- Federated DriveSAFESM telematics, which helps improve employee driving behavior.

- Federated's network of independent estate planning attorneys to support business succession planning.
- In-person Risk Management Academy seminars and monthly educational webinars.
- Direct marketing, risk management, and claims personnel committed to providing unmatched customer service.

Participants spoke in-depth about how Federated Insurance can continue providing value to contractor businesses and industry associations. The perspective gained during the two-



# PLUMBING-HEATING-COOLING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION®

day input meeting will help improve future products and services developed with contractors in mind—and assist Federated in supporting its clients and association partners nationwide.



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# **PHCC Offers New Finance Bootcamp**

The Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association (PHCC) has launched all nine modules of its new Finance Bootcamp. Developed as basic training for business owners and their staff, these self-paced courses will help learners understand the fundamentals of finance so they can make informed, strategic decisions for the financial health of their businesses.

"For plumbing and HVAC technicians, opening their own business is a logical next step, and they may be masters of their craft, but many owners don't completely understand the financial part, and they could fail miserably as a result," says Laurie Crigler, PHCC Education Committee chair.

# Owners and their staffs can take one or take all nine of the modules.

Business owners and their finance staffs can take one or take all nine of the following modules (about 45 minutes each):

- 1. Introduction to Finance
- 2. Understanding a Profit and Loss Statement
- 3. Understanding a Balance Sheet
- 4. Determining Actual Billable Hourly Rates
- 5. Importance of Financial Ratios
- 6. Understanding Your Tax Rights and Responsibilities
- 7. Preventing and Identifying Theft
- 8. Financial Software and Basic Business Skills
- 9. Creating Budgets for Your Business

These modules were developed by the PHCC Education Committee and financial management expert Ruth King, which tapped various subject matter specialists for respective content.

The PHCC Finance Bootcamp is available online for \$50/module for PHCC members (\$90 for nonmembers) or \$345 for the bundle (all nine modules) for PHCC members (\$650 for non-members). PHCC members can log in and register for the modules via PHCC's learning management system at *phccweb.org/education*. If you have not set up your passwordor for more information—contact Heidi Salati at *salati@naphcc.org*.

In the coming year, PHCC also will offer the Bootcamp series in person. The first one, covering all nine modules of this finance basic training, will be live and in-person May 9-10 in Ashland City, Tennessee. The course will be hosted by PHCC Corporate Partner A.O. Smith. The instructor will be well-respected profitability master Ruth King.

To learn more and register visit www. phccweb.org/event/finance-bootcamptennessee.



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The toughest tools down the line." **PIPE CLEA** 

# **CONTRACTOR's 2023 Econ Forecast: The Optimism Paradox**

#### Continued from page 6

months higher than in October 2021.

After surpassing its pre-pandemic level in September, backlog is now back below the reading observed in February 2020. Backlog in the commercial and institutional category posted its largest monthly decline since July 2020 and is now 0.4 months below pre-pandemic levels.

At the same time, ABC's Construction Confidence Index reading for sales increased in October, while the readings for profit margins and staffing fell. All three readings remain above the threshold of 50, indicating expectations of growth over the next six months.

"October's survey data hinted at some emerging weakness in the nation's nonresidential construction sector," said ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu. "While the industry continues to gain strength from significant funding for public work, pandemic-induced behavioral shifts—including remote work and online business meetings as well as surging borrowing costs—are translating into meaningful declines in backlog in commercial and institutional segments."

The Dodge Industry Forecast offered these predictions for 2023:

- The dollar value of **singlefamily starts** will be flat (-5% when adjusted for inflation), however, units will be down a further 6% to 891,000 units (Dodge basis) as higher mortgage rates and worsening affordability eat away at demand
- The **multifamily sector** has been reaping the benefits of the affordability issues plaguing the single family market, pushing demand for space up and vacancy rates down to record lows. The softening labor market and investment outlook will eat away at these gains in 2023
- **Commercial starts** will fall 3% in 2023 (-13% when adjusted for inflation) led by pullbacks in warehouse and office sectors. Hotel and retail starts will post tepid growth in nominal dollars, but when adjusted for inflation will also slip. There is some positivity in the commercial space in 2023, though,

as data center construction is expected to remain brisk

• **Institutional starts**, meanwhile, will hold steady in 2023 (-1% inflation-adjusted) as gains in healthcare offset losses elsewhere. Traditional education starts (classrooms) have languished as slow demographic growth eats away at overall demand. Healthcare starts point, the US will have to rebuild those inventories in 2023, pushing prices up above normal supply/demand market condition rates when it occurs.

In its November 2022 Commodity Report, the American Supply Association found (when compared with October), no increase in the price of thermoplastics. As for cast-iron, both Tyler and Charlotte Pipe reported no changes

# The mood in the construction industry is positive, with moderate-to-high confidence in the outlook for 2023.

will be the engine of growth in the institutional sector as greater demand for both outpatient clinics and hospitals is on the rise

• Manufacturing starts have been robust since the pandemic as reshoring has led to numerous chip fabrication plants, EV battery plants, and other large facilities breaking ground. Manufacturing starts are expected to nearly triple in 2022, and while they will decline in 2023 the level of 2023 starts at \$51 billion has not been seen since the beginning of Dodge's historical starts time series in 1967. The CHIPS and IRA acts will support abnormally high levels of activity for years to come

#### **Materials**

It is difficult to disentangle inflation from other factors—the availability of raw materials, supply chain disruptions—that affect the price of necessary tools, equipment and supplies.

The price of gasoline is a chief concern for anyone managing a fleet, or who uses supplies shipped by truck (i.e., everyone). Global recession fears have pushed the price of crude oil down, despite continued stable consumption in the US. Petroleum production in the US is still trending slowly toward the 13-million barrels-per-day benchmark, and products used in petroleum production should remain in stable demand despite falling crude oil prices.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserves continue to be at historically low levels (the lowest since 1984) and at some regarding cast-iron pipe, fittings and/or couplings-gaskets for the month.

Carbon steel hot-rolled coil pricing continues to fall. Lead times also have fallen on HRC from four weeks to three weeks. The price direction of stainless-steel welded pipe has long been driven primarily by the price of nickel. Nickel was regarded as the most volatile base metal before the historic short squeeze occurred on the London Metal Exchange (LME) last March. Since that time, LME trading volumes have fallen sharply. October's daily average trading volumes were down 54% year-on-year and represented the lowest monthly trading activity in at least a decade.

But a snapshot in time cannot tell the entire picture. "We continue to expect pressure from high inflation, supply chain constrains, and some specialty raw materials," Andres Caballero, President of Uponor, North America, said in response to questions from *CONTRACTOR*. "We will look into market dynamics proactively as we consider possible price actions while ensuring customers get the most value from our products and solutions."

When asked about price increases for water heating equipment in the coming year, Noritz's Executive VP and General Manager, Jason Fleming, said, "This has not been decided yet, but we are doing our best to keep pricing consistent, as everyone is facing cost challenges, and increased prices will present more. If we continue to see increases [in raw materials costs], we will need to plan accordingly."

#### Labor and Productivity

Employers added 223,000 jobs in December of 2022, finishing a year in which the economy added 4.5 million jobs, refilling the hole left by the coronavirus pandemic. Hiring has slowed since the first half of last year, when employers were adding more than 400,000 jobs a month, on average, and a continued slowdown is expected.

But the tight labor market has hit the skilled trades harder than other sectors. According to a recent story on NPR.org, the application rate for young people seeking technical jobs—like plumbing, building and electrical work —dropped by 49% in 2022 compared to 2020 (based on data from online recruiting platform Handshake).

Despite local, state and federal money for skills training, and despite numerous shops around the country offering "earn-while-you-learn" programs, the skilled trades still face an image problem that makes attracting the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts difficult. At the same time, the Baby Boomers continue to retire; 75 million are expected to leave the workforce by 2030, paving the way for what some are calling "The Great Retirement."

In response, many manufacturers are offering products and services designed to boost productivity, allowing contractors to accomplish more work even with fewer hands. For example, Uponor has begun offering a kitting service that provides customized, coordinated packaging with select products, a materials list, plan view, and 3D isometric drawing in individual packets delivered directly to the job site. The service is ideal deal for buildings with high repeatable room types, such as apartments, condominiums, dormitories, hotels, assisted-living centers, and hospitals.

In a year-end address, Jim McGoldrick, Senior Vice President, Sales, for Bradford White, stressed the company's focus on delivering innovative solutions, saying, "Bradford White's vision for the next 30 years and beyond is staying laser-focused on innovation and providing the solutions our customers need."



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# Digital Tools - a Contractor's Best Hedge Against Economic Uncertainty

#### Continued from page 46

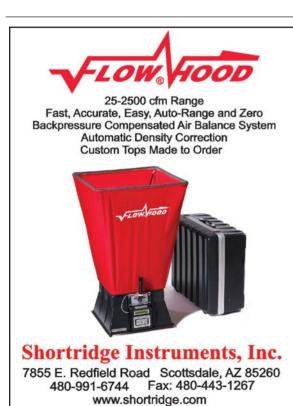
together, improve collaboration and reduce the time it takes on traditional processes.

While the construction industry is starting to

prioritize the implementation of technology into its practices it remains relatively change-averse, "old school" business. Nearly 40% of specialty contractors report they still primarily use spreadsheets, whiteboards, paper-based processes, or other methods instead of construction tech platforms

The right construction planning and management solutions digitize the important information and papers that contractors, and subcontractors use the most. Instead of sifting through old bidding documents, spreadsheets, and random notes, software solutions provide quick and easy document replication, streamline bidding and other vital processes, and save businesses' time and money.

For example, digitizing estimating and material takeoff tasks reduces the amount of time needed to complete proposals and repetitive paperwork. The increased accuracy also reduces the chances of cost overages and makes for easier cash flow. Automation and cloud-based technology also make it faster and



easier for contractors and subcontractors to find new projects and provide a complete suite of tools that help you create winning bids and get there before your competition.

Digitizing estimating and material takeoff tasks reduces the amount of time needed to complete proposals and repetitive paperwork.

The technology is particularly helpful in the crucial bidding process. Easy access to documents and data helps create more detailed, accurate, and speedier bids. The right applications also notify construction professionals about new projects in their service area and can help them place their bids ahead of the competitors and gain an advantage.

Of course, effective bidding requires more than speed or low offers. Contractors and subcontractors need to build trust with project developers and showcase the attributes that make them a better fit than their competitors. Integrated construction platforms allow construction professionals to complete extensive profiles of their businesses. They can create and save data illustrating their success,

such as the completion of previous projects, safety records, licenses, and much more.

This provides potential clients with the full scope of the company's true value and ability.

Digital solutions can revolutionize the way contractors and subcontractors save money, maximize efficiencies and lessen

the effects of rising inflation. By utilizing innovative construction planning and management technology now, construction professionals can improve critical business functions, strengthen collaboration, and be bettered prepared for the challenges ahead.

Ro Bhatia is the CEO of PlanHub, the leading cloudbased preconstruction platform that enables general contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers to connect and collaborate on construction projects across the US. PlanHub was created by contractors, for contractors, to simplify the construction bidding process.

# 8 Seasonal Opportunities for Contractors

# Continued from page 45 Bath and Kitchen Remodeling

Contractors looking to diversify into more familiar territory may consider bath and kitchen remodeling. Both these areas rely on pipe systems, so plumbers likely already have much of the equipment and experience necessary. Renovations may be more popular in the summer, but performing them in the colder months has several advantages.

Traveling homeowners can take advantage of their time away to hire a contractor to finish a remodeling job while they're out of the house. Lower demand can also justify reduced prices, helping appeal to more customers. If nothing else, it's one more option contractors have to gain business during the off-season.

## **3. Smart HVAC Installation**

HVAC contractors can take slower seasons as an opportunity to branch into smart home technology. Internet of Things (IoT) gadgets like smart thermostats are becoming increasingly popular, with 48.4% of U.S. households expected to use at least one such device by 2025.

Smart HVAC technology installation and maintenance requires IoT-specific knowledge and skills. Contractors that lean more into this trend and pursue these abilities can improve their standings in a growing market before it becomes the norm. Smart tech often reduces energy consumption and spending, so installing it before the high-use warmer months is ideal timing.

#### Keep Business Going Year-Round

Fall and winter may be challenging for many contractors, but they don't have to mean significant losses. HVAC and plumbing professionals who know what seasonal opportunities to capitalize on can ensure ongoing business year-round. These eight areas aren't a definitive list of possibilities but are an excellent place to start.

Oscar Collins is the editor-in-chief at Modded. Follow him on Twitter @TModded for frequent updates on his work.

# World Plumbing Council Invites Submissions for Annual Scholarships

ONTARIO, CA — The World Plumbing Council is accepting applications for its three annual scholarships, two of which are awarded to plumbers to travel internationally to learn more about the industry, and the third of which goes to a trainer/instructor to attend the annual UA Instructor Training Program in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

# Each scholarship provides up to \$15,000 in funding to cover approved expenses.

The scholarships are available to individuals actively involved in their local plumbing industry, particularly in education and training. They help create an educational exchange between plumbing industry participants from different countries; increase awareness of the contribution plumbing has made to global health, sustainability, and the environment; and provide a platform for networking and relationship building on a global level, helping strengthen the inter-connectedness of the global plumbing industry.

The Scholarship for Least Developed and **Developing Countries** is a one-time grant for an

individual actively involved in their local plumbing industry, particularly in education and training, to travel to another country for the purpose of developing and contributing further plumbing industry knowledge. The applicant must be a citizen of either a least developed country or a developing country. The Education

and Training Scholarship is a one-time grant for an individual actively involved in their local plumbing industry, particularly in education and training, to travel to another country for the purpose of developing and contributing further plumbing industry knowledge.

The **United Association Instructor Training Program Scholarship** is a grant awarded annually to a trainer, instructor, or teacher (or trainee instructor or teacher) from the plumbing industry (plumbing, sprinkler fitting or HVAC), to travel to the United States to take part in the annual UA Instructor Training Program (ITP). The ITP is held each August in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. The recipient will take part in a range of courses that are available over the course of one week.

"The UA is excited to accept recipients from abroad again after a long three years of banned travel," WPC Chair and UA Director of Plumbing Services Tom Bigley said. "The friendships that we made with

past winners Jean Claude Twagirimana from Rwanda and Sudip Das from India have continued to this day. We look forward to welcoming next year's scholarship winner to ITP and sharing all the new technology

and training methods for plumbing, as well as learning from our guest about how they train in their countries."

Each scholarship provides up to \$15,000 in funding to cover approved expenses for the duration of the program. The scholarship applications may be downloaded from *https://www.worldplumbing. org/scholarship/.* The application deadline for each scholarship is Sept. 30, 2023.

# **Goettl Expands With Two New Acquisitions**

LAS VEGAS, NV – Goettl Air Conditioning & Plumbing ("Goettl"), a leading provider of HVAC and plumbing services in the southwest, announced two newly acquired businesses, SoCal Airflow Pros in Rancho Santa Margarita, California and 4 Seasons Heating & Cooling in Reno, Nevada. Both are a part of Goettl's "Goettlize the Nation" strategy and will serve as significant additions to Goettl's market presence.

Goettl's market presence.AIR CONDITIONING • PLUMBINGSoCal Airflow Pros, a veter-an-owned and operated HVAC con-tractor providing services to the SouthernCalifornia area, marks the fifth Goettl branch in theSouthern California region. Goettl will work withSoCal Airflow Pros' Cody Novini leveraging his lead-ership and industry expertise to continue building astrong presence in Southern California.

4 Seasons Heating & Cooling, an HVAC company serving Reno residents since 2008, will signal Goettl's entry into the Reno market, further expanding its Nevada operations. Mike Miller will continue to lead his team and grow Goettl's market share in Northern Nevada.

"We've identified these businesses as key acquisitions for scaling the Goettl brand and adding talent to the team." said Ken Goodrich, of Goettl. "We are looking for-

CEO of Goettl. "We are looking forward to serving these markets with the

unparalleled quality of work Goettl is known for, and that's something that excites us. Both Cody and Mike have done great work building out their teams, and we are happy to welcome them to the Goettl family."

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with 0.35 or 0.5 GPM flow rates, as well as a multilaminar spray type. They can be either hardwired or battery-powered. The faucets feature easy below-deck maintenance. Sloan Valve Co. WWW.SLOAN.COM



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#### THE MIKROFILL 3 **PRESSURIZATION UNIT** is designed

to be connected directly to a building's incoming mains/

supply and fill a heating or chilled water system without the use of a circulating pump. It is uses as little as 30 watts/hr. when

filling a low-pressure hot-water and chilled-water system. Stuart Turner/Mikrofill Systems WWW.MIKROFILL.US



#### THE IDS PREMIUM CONNECTED **AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMP** provides

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# editor's choice

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by Steve Spaulding

# You Don't Make it Easy

Contractor of the Year is an impossible job.

I guess I should say, "very difficult job," because year in, year out, we somehow manage to pick one, but it seems making the final decision gets more difficult with every passing year.

I've said before in this space that the real value of the trade press is in shining a spotlight on those people and organizations that are doing exceptional work, be they contractors, manufacturers or in fields such as code development, advocacy or training.

The problem is that there are so many contractors out there doing excellent work—and doing that work in so many ways. For some the focus is on innovative technology and processes; for some the focus is on the community they've built (both within and around their company); for some it's in how they've managed adversity, or adapted to change.

When I first took the top job here at *CONTRACTOR* the candidates I considered were the mechanical contractors I

already had some kind of relationship with, either from reporting stories or working up case studies. It didn't make the decision any easier, but I had fewer contractors to choose between.

But now—and wow, 2023 will mark my fifth year as Editor-in-Chief—I either

ling story? And this year, Editor-at-Large John Mesenbrink brought me a great one.

We are proud to name Linda Hudek, Master Plumber and owner-operator of LH Plumbing Services, LLC, our Contractor of the Year (you can read the feature starting on pg. 28). LH Plumbing is an

# We are proud to name Linda Hudek, Master Plumber and owner-operator of LH Plumbing Services, LLC, our Contractor of the Year.

talk to or hear about amazing contractors doing amazing things every day. Check out our profile of New England Total Energy on pg. 36, or how Hiller Plumbing or Applewood Plumbing are giving back to their communities on pg. 3, or even how Ron the Sewer Rat is using new technology on pg. 48.

When it's too late to put the decision off any further I fall back on the one standard that has served me most reliably over the years: what makes for the most compeloutlier compared to past award-recipients for a couple of reasons. And to be clear, these reasons are not the only reasons the company was chosen, but they are worth mentioning.

First, LH Plumbing is a one-woman operation. I think it's important to note that while the size of an organization may give you the opportunity to do more things, or take on larger projects, no one has the monopoly on quality, innovation, or their ability to contribute to



society in general and the PHC industry in specific.

Second, she's a woman. We've given our Contractor of the Year Award to companies that were husband and wife teams, and to several family-owned companies that had mothers, wives, sisters and daughters in management, but this is the first female-owned company we've chosen to name COTY. And it's long past time we did.

With less than 10% of the people working in the plumbing trades female, women represent an enormous untapped resource, one that could reshape the workforce and solve a lot of the hiring challenges almost every contractor is facing. But first women need to see people who look like them working in the trades—succeeding and thriving in the trades. If their perception never changes, our reality never will.

So again, our congratulations to LH Plumbing Services, and our wishes for their continued success in the New Year, and for many years to come.

# **ADVERTISER INDEX**

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# A single source for your fluid solutions.

As the largest provider of both rental equipment and fluid solutions in North America, United Rentals can help you if you need one piece of equipment or a custom-engineered solution. We have pumps, tanks, filtration systems and experts who know how to work the tech to manage them through Total Control<sup>®</sup>.

Call 800.UR.RENTS or visit UnitedRentals.com/Fluid



# **More Venting Flexibility with PVC!**

Now approved for PVC along with polypropylene and CPVC vent materials. See IOM for full details and specifications.

# **DCC/DCB** A Family of High-Efficiency, Gas-Fired Condensing Boilers!





- Save Energy and Money! The [AI] control automatically modulates the gas input and continuously adjusts to ensure safe, quiet and efficient operation.
- **ECO Friendly!** Less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and ENERGY STAR<sup>®</sup> certified with up to 95% AFUE. May qualify for utility rebates!
- State-of-the-art technology is continually tested and improved by our experienced team of Engineers right here in the USA - ensures years of worry-free performance and reliable operation.
- Models for Every Application! Wall hung and floor standing models fit any location. Combi models offer domestic hot water and home heating in one appliance, eliminating the need for a traditional tank-style water heater.
- **Easy Service.** Wall hung models feature removable side panels.

Туре	Wall Mounted [W x H x D]	Floor Standing [W x H x D]	CH Mode Input	DHW Mode Max.	DHW Flow Rate
СОМВІ	<b>DCC-115</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 13 <sup>9/16</sup> "]	<b>DCCF-115</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x17 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	16.6 - 93.5 MBH	115.5 MBH	2.5 GPM
	<b>DCC-150</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 13 <sup>9/16</sup> "]	<b>DCCF-150</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x17 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	22.0 - 125 MBH	153.0 MBH	3.5 GPM
	<b>DCC-205</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 21 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	<b>DCCF-205</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 23 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	29.5 - 164 MBH	205.0 MBH	5.0 GPM
HEAT ONLY	<b>DCB-75</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 13 <sup>9/16</sup> "]	<b>DCBF-75</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x17 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	16.6 - 75 MBH		
	<b>DCB-100</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 13 <sup>9/16</sup> "]	<b>DCBF-100</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x17 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	16.6 - 93.5 MBH		
	<b>DCB-125</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 13 <sup>9/16</sup> "]	<b>DCBF-125</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x17 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	22.0 - 125 MBH		
	<b>DCB-165</b> [17 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 30" x 21 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	<b>DCBF-165</b> [24 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 43 <sup>3/4</sup> " x 23 <sup>1/2</sup> "]	29.5 - 164 MBH		











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# Rinnai

# The Unparalleled Leader in Tankless Water Heaters

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With cutting-edge technology and highquality customer experiences, Rinnai is leading the charge on game-changing tankless innovation.

# A Letter to Our Partners from Rinnai's President, Frank Windsor

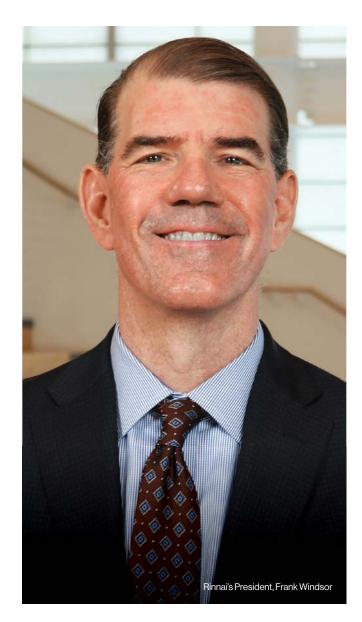
As we dive into 2023, we move further away from supply chain issues and a volatile post-pandemic world. However, looking ahead this year, we see new challenges presenting themselves, such as a projected recession and a shaky economy. But despite all that is happening, we've all seen perseverance in the water heating industry with tremendous growth opportunities in the tankless water heater market.

We understand the growth stemmed from increased product awareness and the demand for greener, more efficient applications. But a key factor that drove Rinnai to be the number one tankless water heater manufacturer in North America is all the support we've received from our PROs in the field.

## We're invested in you.

We are adamant about providing the tools you need to grow your business and the information you need to sell tankless water heaters. Even with the increase in consumer demand, we need trained professionals to install our tankless water heaters. And we believe that by providing the training and education you need to understand and install our product is paramount. We want to be the best partners we can be in supporting and growing your business, and we've done that through two investments:

- **Training:** We offer training in person at our headquarters or specific customer locations. Our Innovation and Training Center was completed in 2020, where we provide an interactive experience not only to learn about the many products and services Rinnai has to offer, but also to participate in live fire training in our training dojo. Additionally, we have a variety of online training tools, and we regularly conduct virtual webinars.
- **Try Rinnai Tour:** To make training with Rinnai even easier, we've brought it straight to your doors through the Try Rinnai Tour a Rinnai-branded van the sales team drives to a requested location to perform in-person training.



## We're invested in North America.

Rinnai has invested \$100 million in strategic expansions across North America to deliver all the tools you need to fuel your business. In 2018, Rinnai built its brand-new headquarters and in 2020, we opened our state-of-the-art Innovation and Training Center. This year, Rinnai completed its 300,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Griffin, GA. This particular investment will manufacture and ship many Rinnai products to North America, where over 100K units have already been completed since its opening in April 2022.

We're here to provide high-quality tankless water heaters and reliable hot water to residential and commercial markets. But we're also here to make sure you have the tools to succeed alongside us. Thank you for your support along the way, but there's a lot more to come and we hope you join us for the journey.

Rinnai's brand promise of *Creating a healthier way of living*<sup>®</sup> is at the forefront of all the company's efforts. By continuing to provide PROs and your customers with the tools needed to grow your business, Rinnai is aiding in providing homes and commercial buildings with energy-efficient hot water options for cleaner and healthier living.

# Product Feature: RE·Series<sup>™</sup>

The RE•Series<sup>™</sup> non-condensing tankless water heater is the first non-condensing unit with a built-in pump, featuring Smart-Circ<sup>™</sup> Intelligent Recirculation<sup>™</sup> technology. Proudly assembled at Rinnai's recently opened manufacturing facility in Griffin, GA, the RE•Series<sup>™</sup> is the first major tankless water heater brand manufactured in the U.S. The Smart-Circ<sup>™</sup> Intelligent Recirculation<sup>™</sup> technology learns a user's hot water usage patterns over seven days, then schedules the built-in pump and times recirculation patterns accordingly. Users enjoy hot water during regular demand periods while saving energy and money.





# The RE·Series<sup>™</sup> Is Proudly Assembled in Griffin, GA

Rinnai established its U.S. operations in 1974 and introduced tankless water heating to the North American market in 2000. In 2018 Rinnai manufactured its first tankless water heater in the United States in Griffin, GA. Our new manufacturing facility was completed in 2021 with production of the new RE•Series<sup>™</sup> tankless water heaters beginning in 2022. Rinnai continues to make significant investments in expanding its operations and product portfolio, focusing on its brand promise of *Creating a healthier way of living*<sup>®</sup>.

# Being a Cutting-Edge Leader in Innovation

It's a given. Innovation drives businesses forward, and by adapting and anticipating customers' wants and needs, innovation promotes a business's willingness to learn and grow. As the number one manufacturer of tankless water heaters in North America, Rinnai is at the forefront of that belief, leading the charge on game-changing innovation. We drive cutting-edge technology to provide the highest-quality experience for our PROs and their customers.

# **Advanced technology**

Rinnai values developing our customer-centric products with the highest quality and efficiency in mind. During the design process, our global team of highly skilled engineers investigates new and innovative ways to push the boundaries. Examples include using 3D printers to prototype designs before production. With this technology our engineers gather constructive customer feedback, translating this into design concepts that are then turned into reality with 3D printing, finding and anticipating potential improvements before going into final product development. Through this process, we've discovered better utilizations for recirculation, reducing water usage, smart technology, and so much more. Some of our most recent groundbreaking products include:

- The launch of the world's first 100% hydrogen combustion technology for residential water heaters; utilizing this alternate fuel source provides the opportunity to eliminate CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.
- The RE-Series<sup>™</sup> and SENSEI<sup>™</sup> RSC models with their integrated Smart-Circ<sup>™</sup> Intelligent Recirculation<sup>™</sup>; listening to our customer feedback, we developed a "set it once" self-learning (artificial intelligence) system that learns and adapts to customers' hot water utilization patterns. The result — a system that provides hot water when it's needed while delivering market-leading water and energy savings.

## **Being a good partner**

Part of our research for the development of new, groundbreaking products results from first-hand, in-the-field experience. Professional contractors, plumbers, and engineers have the feedback we need to make improvements to our products that will directly and positively impact them and their businesses. It's about creating not only a better product but a better product that will help our customers' businesses grow and thrive. We host regular meetings to get the insights needed, asking PROs what their biggest challenges are and how we can ultimately deliver a solution. To test new products before they hit the market, Rinnai will join PROs at the job site for an installation. This provides real-time data for Rinnai's team of engineers to take back to the R&D lab and adjust designs if needed. Through this process, they've found better ways to decrease the amount of labor needed for installation, improve overall installation times, and increase profitability for our PROs. We're here to be a partner, to provide industry-leading, innovative solutions that help PROs solve challenging problems at the job site.

# Creating a healthier way of living®

Rinnai's commitment to *Creating a healthier way of living*<sup>®</sup> is seen in all its innovations. Our promise to PROs and their customers is to look specifically at ways to maximize efficiency for a better, healthier world. Our tankless water heaters are designed with that in mind, being between 85% and 95% efficient. Maximizing energy consumption and reducing water usage provide customers with insurmountable savings. And we are making continuous improvements on energy and water utilization, diving deeper into developing fuel-agnostic tankless water heaters for an even cleaner future.

Rinnai values quality and efficiency, while always looking at ways to solve job site challenges for PROs and their customers. These beliefs will continue to drive Rinnai's game-changing innovation forward for years to come.





# **Product Feature: RSC**

Rinnai's SENSEI<sup>™</sup> RSC condensing tankless water heater offers a variety of new benefits to homeowners and PROs. The RSC features the latest addition of Smart-Circ<sup>™</sup> Intelligent Recirculation<sup>™</sup> technology. In addition, the RSC model has a more efficient multispeed DC pump, providing improved performance with a higher flow rate, better head pressure, and more flexible operation. Upgrades are also seen in high-temperature climes with the revised low-flow activation logic. The RSC model provides the latest in improved performance technology and efficiency, but it also reduces install time and costs for PROs.



# **Product Feature: Hydrogen Unit**

Rinnai announced last year that it has successfully developed the world's first 100% hydrogen combustion technology for residential water heaters. This water heater is solely powered by hydrogen, which is coveted as a clean fuel source, driving Rinnai further toward carbon neutrality. Rinnai places high emphasis on reducing emissions from product usage after sale. For this reason, we've conducted research into combustion technology to control gases, such as air and fuel, and gained experience in practical applications that led to the development of the hydrogen unit.

Currently, gas and electricity are the main fuels used in residential water heaters throughout the world. The spread of hydrogen infrastructure is a prerequisite for achieving carbon neutrality and major countries are looking toward this renewable energy as an alternate energy source. Rinnai will continue to enhance and improve the hydrogen units for eventual mass production, as hydrogen infrastructure is installed throughout the world.

# RELY on Rinnai

For many businesses, having a reliable source of hot water is vital to the success of their operation. Rinnai's expertise in water heating as a service to our customers is both comprehensive and simple. This allows our customers to be worry-free and focus on their business knowing that Rinnai will ensure they have abundant hot water when they need it.

For commercial business partners looking for a fully managed experience, Rinnai offers a turnkey hot water solution through its National Accounts program. This unique program offers everything from custom system design to start-up and maintenance to ongoing 24/7 emergency response and billing.

Rinnai's one-stop hot water experience for hotels, multifamily units, restaurants, and other commercial customers provides the following level of white glove service:

- Custom system design and 100% guaranteed system sizing.
- Start-up and maintenance.
- 24/7 hot water emergency response support to ensure businesses can function at their maximum potential.
- · Pricing quotes and accurate billing.

Additionally, to provide a worry-free solution for its customers, Rinnai handles all aspects of the businesses' hot water from selecting the plumber to processing payments for the project.

Since its inception, Rinnai's National Accounts program has grown, now handling anything from small businesses to franchises with thousands of locations. To cater to the growing demand for tankless water heaters, as well as Rinnai's growing clientele, the company has developed a vast list of contractors nationwide, who are readily available to complete jobs when required as part of the Rinnai network.





# **Product Feature: Demand Duo**

Rinnai's Demand Duo is the best solution for any commercial business; it heats water in the tankless unit rather than inside the tank, providing:

- Zero thermal stress on the tank.
- More hot water capacity, since the tank only holds two magnesium anode rods.
- Easy, cost-effective tankless maintenance versus replacing an entire tank every few years.
- Ideal for emergency replacement; installs like a tank but up to 20% lighter.

#### **Benefits of Demand Duo**

- Unsurpassed first-hour delivery and efficient tank recovery keep pace with demand.
- · Saves money with lower energy costs.
- Longer warranty up to two times longer than traditional tanks.

# **Case Study**

RGS Properties — 20 Midtown Apartments 20 Midtown Apartments, Building 3, Birmingham, AL

# About 20 Midtown

- 325 residential apartments on floors 2-5.
- 35 natural gas tankless water heaters utilized for residential water heating (divided into four quadrants in the building).
- Four natural gas meters utilized to serve all 325 apartments.
- All retail located on the ground floor.

# Situation

RGS Properties developed a new multifamily unit in downtown Birmingham, AL. During Phase One of the project, which included Buildings 1 and 2, the developer installed individual 40-gallon electric tank water heaters into each apartment unit. The building owner decided to change course and focus on deploying a more efficient and economic water heating solution. As such, the developer installed a new central tankless water heating system for Building 3. As a result, 20 Midtown Apartments did not have the burden of servicing and maintaining 325 individual tank water heaters and was able to reduce energy costs and deliver more immediate hot water to residents.





# Solution

The tankless rack systems serving the apartments are centrally located on the top floor of each quadrant of the building.

- Use 35 tankless water heaters instead of 325 electric water heaters.
- Place water heaters on the top floor in four common areas.
- Utilize a common vent system for all tankless units.
- Only four natural gas meters serve all apartments.

# **Benefits**

- Provides hot water in six seconds.
- Reduces electrical cost.
- Reduces upfront cost.
- Reduces energy cost upwards of 80% per apartment.
- Reduces maintenance cost.
- Eliminates hot water outages.
- Save space.
- Minimizes venting requirements.
- Eliminates multiple meters.



# **8 Tankless Truths** that set the record straight.

#### TRUTH 1

**Tankless does work with** cold inlet temperatures.

#### **TRUTH 2**

Tankless water heaters are not expensive to purchase and install.

#### TRUTH 3

Venting is not expensive on tankless water heaters.

## TRUTH 4

**Tankless is not more expensive** to maintain than tanks.

#### **TRUTH 5**

**Tankless water heaters respond** quickly to high demand.

#### **TRUTH 6**

**Stainless steel heat exchangers** are not always better.

#### TRUTH 7

Tankless doesn't always mean upgrading your gas line.

#### TRUTH 8

Tankless has been proven.

Every. Detail. Matters.<sup>5M</sup>

Learn more at rinnai.us/tanklesstruths



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RSC Condensing tankless water heater Rinnai



**RE**•Series<sup>™</sup> Non-condensing tankless water heater