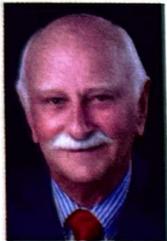


No Pressure, No Problem



No Pressure Selling
ACT Group

One of the foundational truths of the ACT process is that you can Profit from Knowledge.

During October's Service World Expo, we will induct Steve Howard, who has devoted his life to HVACR technical training and No Pressure Selling®. The event runs from October 15 to 17.

Steve Howard was born in 1948 in Flagstaff Arizona. He signed on to the US Air Force while still in high school, using the early enlistment option. While in Vietnam, he trained and served as an aircraft mechanic, and volunteered for missions distributing psychological warfare leaflets and other operations. Back home, he continued his aviation mechanic's training, and earned an A&P license (Aircraft & Power train). When commercial aviation fell on hard times, Howard used his remaining GI Bill funds to study refrigeration at Atlanta Technical College, where he learned from Claude La Haie, the teacher he credits with helping him get established on his HVACR journey. "He went out of his way to be sure we were successful above and beyond the call of duty," Howard said. In 2022, out of gratitude for Mr. La Haie's influence on his life and career, Steve and Charlotte Howard established the Steve and Charlotte Howard Award Scholarship and the Claude La Haie HVAC Scholarship.

Technical Foundation

Steve Howard began his HVACR technician career at Hobaica Services of Phoenix in 1972, and later worked for six years at Industrial Refrigeration, rising to become service manager for 16 technicians across the state. From 1979 to 1985 Howard provided training for Trane and then Carrier commercial franchises. Howard parlayed that job into commercial sales, and his self-training included night school, where he studied real estate, which helped him take a new sales approach.

"Once I made a contract with a client, instead of speaking about overhauls and service agreements, I talked about return on investment, cap rates and net operating income. I'd show owners how they could reduce their net operating costs by maintaining equipment. We also taught them how to use the utility rate for commercial businesses. We were saving people thousands of dollars each month."

Carrier purchased the franchises, and Howard stayed with Carrier, teaching building operators how to operate chilled water plants. In 1986, the savings and loan industry collapsed, which caused a decline in operator funds for maintenance and training.

Moving on, Howard became an instructor for Alabama Power's Alabama Heat Pump Training Center,

where he developed a popular seminar: "How to Sell Heat Pumps by Focusing on Value Instead of Price."

"That was basically how I started my sales training program," Howard said. "The key was to sell the benefits of heat pumps. It was amazing, and changed everything."

"Then I started sales training for YORK, and as luck would have it, Trane sent a vice president and a manager to one of my heat pump programs in Alabama. They liked it so much they asked me to work with them. Our company has been doing work with Trane almost exclusively for 35 years."

Steve and Charlotte founded ACT (Air Conditioning Training) in 1985. It was incorporated and renamed ACT Group, Inc. in 1989. Five ACT Group trainers are on call for training. They're all independent contractors with their own businesses.

Howard trademarked several sales titles within the No Pressure Selling® program: Sell the Way Your Customers Want to Buy®; Design the Ideal Comfort Solution®; and a Comfort Concerns List®, which is used to help consumers state their home comfort problems and needs.

"The lion's share of contractors today use a 'good/better/best' process," Howard said. "The problem is, one of the choices has something they don't want, and another choice is leaving something out. Design the Ideal Comfort Solution gives the customer exactly what they want, the resistance melts away and closing ratios increase."

Jim Hinshaw, a fellow consultant and close friend of Steve Howard, now with Service Nation, offered these words: "I've shared the stage with Steve several times and had many conversations with him. He's an outstanding trainer. I found myself in envy of his presentation style and skill. The material he's developed for contractors is first rate. His service agreement program was way ahead of its time. He built upon the work of Ron Smith and Jackie Rainwater."

"Steve built a training organization. Most trainers are one-man bands. Steve's ACT Group was and is a true business with a number of trainers. Steve developed, in my opinion, the most professional and polished material for his customers/contractors to use."

Thank you, Steve Howard for your support of HVAC contractors everywhere, and welcome to the Contracting Business HVAC Hall of Fame. **CB**