

Service training can increase company profits

Editor's note: The following excerpts are from an article provided by Steve Howard, president, Air Conditioning Training & Consulting, Phoenix, Az. Howard has been involved in maintenance, air conditioning service and training for more than 20 years and his background includes positions as a service manager for a state-wide Trane franchise and a customer service representative for the Carrier Service organization.

Training Events

Information to be covered depends on your company's needs and level of current technical expertise. Most of the material covered should be advanced, but yearly review of the basics allow the technician to solve problems when all else fails.

Some training should be non-technical. Customer relations should be stressed. In the heat of battle, it's easy to forget how important customers are. Sales training should also be presented. The technician should know how to sell products and services that will benefit the customer.

A training routine should be established. Once a week can be very productive if handled correctly. One secret is to find a person who is willing to take total responsibility for training. This person could be the owner, service manager, or a committed technician.

Every training session must be managed. Training should always start and stop on time. And there should never be any doubt who is in control.

The best instructors may be the technicians themselves, but remember, not everyone is comfortable teaching. An older technician may be a natural. There is no substitute for first hand knowledge and life experience. Ask for volunteers, and reward participation. Everyone, even the newest technician, has something to offer that all need to know.

There are equipment and component manufacturers who would be glad to help train your staff. If a manufacturer can show your technicians how his equipment should operate, he may have fewer problems and warranty returns.

Service training may be the easiest way to increase profits now and in the future. It is the key to establishing a stronger service base as it enables change. Service training also allows a forum to address current service problems. Until somebody shows a better way, people will keep on making the same mistakes.

Few service companies have an ongoing service training program, but planning for it can be easy. Plan around a day when everyone has to be in the office anyway. The day the technicians turn in their paperwork, pick up uniforms or get paid may be a natural day for service training.

The best time for service training may be before the work day begins. Everyone is fresh. If mornings don't work evenings or weekends may be the answer. A contractor shouldn't have to pay technicians to attend an ongoing service training program. All service training should be voluntary. The knowledge gained by the technician is his to keep.

Weekly training may be the only time the technicians get to see their counterparts. A few minutes of open discussion can be worth its weight in gold. This can lead to a team organization and team problem solving.



Air Conditioning Training & Consulting (ACT) offers training for service organizations/technician development, and for property owners/managers of large facilities. In the above photo, a U.S. Air Force technician gets "hands-on" training at the Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix, Az. during an "Air Conditioning Operations and Efficiency Seminar."

Steve Howard, ACT president, explains that classes or one-on-one training can be held at any company's business location, using that company's particular equipment for teaching.

A one or two day professional seminar per year can be money in the bank. A professional seminar leader can boost morale for months to come. Professional training also shows that an organization is strongly committed to employees and customers. Available seminar topics range from customer relations and sales to advanced troubleshooting techniques.

An ideal time for an organization to communicate with its employees is immediately after a training session. It is

amazing how non-technical communications will improve just because there is a forum available.

An ongoing service training program not only keeps talented employees, but it can create a waiting list of potential technicians who are hungry for knowledge.

With a little planning and management, an ongoing service training program may be the most profitable investment available. **SR**



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