



THE UNIFIED GROUP

together we make the difference

We are an independent association of the country's elite HVAC commercial contractors. We help our members increase productivity, profitability and customer retention, and we also provide a network for national and regional customer business solutions. Visit us at www.theunifiedgroup.com.

employee spotlight

Russ Castilow / Project Salesman

Hailing from West (By God) Virginia, Russ is a proud Charlotte transplant. Like so many others, he and the majority of his immediate family, are all new-southerners. Russ is the main point of contact for many of our clients in regards to upgrades, replacement, and changes to their



HVAC systems. Anna is Russ's better half and they reside in South Charlotte along with their two canine kids. If you need any modifications or help in any HVAC way, or just want a great fishing companion, Russ is your man!

comfort zone

in this issue

- It Can Be Easy Being Green
- Share Best Practices Through Peer Groups
- Are You R-22 Ready?
- One Link of the Chain

it can be easy being green

Words like "green", "environmental" and even "sustainability" are fast becoming today's buzzwords.

Green or sustainable building is the practice of creating healthier and more resource-efficient models of construction, renovation, operation, maintenance, and demolition. Many ideas and practices can fall under the "green" heading, such as the last person to leave turns off the lights, or corporate site selectors look for space near public transportation. What is clear is that green directly impacts buildings and HVAC.

Commercial buildings have a tremendous impact on both the physical and social environment. Energy costs represent 30% of a typical building's annual budget and is the single largest operating cost. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, commercial buildings alone account for 18% of total energy consumption. In addition to energy, buildings also generate a large amount of greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, waste and other by-products that can harm the environment.

Individual building managers and owners, working with building engineers and local contractors, are best positioned to understand which green initiatives will work for their properties. A large investment of capital is often not a requirement to make a building more environmentally friendly. There are operational practices that offer environmental benefits while improving the net operating income of the building.

Green starts with energy. Optimizing energy performance is the primary means of lessening environmental impact and enhancing asset value. Building owners can start with steps that are low in capital requirements like tuning systems and upgrading lighting. The useful life of mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems can be extended by 20-30% if they are properly sized and managed. Having reduced the overall energy requirements of a property, owners and managers have an opportunity to save money by using energy savings to offset the cost of capital intensive plant upgrades and other green strategies.

In addition to energy savings, other potential green benefits include: improved air and water quality, conservation and restoration of natural resources, reduced operating costs, enhanced occupant comfort and health, and improved productivity. Research increasingly demonstrates that when buildings are designed and operated with their lifecycle impacts in mind, they can provide great environmental, economic, and social benefits.

Make energy optimization an ongoing process. The key requirement for any green initiative is employee and/or tenant buy-in. Motivation spreads. Get your tenants and employees excited about a cleaner and healthier work environment!

We provide good people you can trust, in environments where trust isn't a luxury, it's essential. Our technology works to reduce your costs. We provide up to the minute status on your account along with accurate, timely invoices.

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are you R-22 ready?

Beginning in 2009, equipment manufacturers will no longer produce R-22 based equipment, and refrigerant production itself will also be reduced. In 2019, R-22 will no longer be made. Because of these coming changes, demand for R-22 is at historically high levels.

If you need to replace a unit, consider an alternative refrigerant based equipment, such as R410a. These new refrigerants are 100% non-ozone depleting, are not subject to a phase out, and in many cases are more efficient than R-22, which will save money on utility bills. The extra expenditure now may save you money in future maintenance and repair costs. ☐☐☐

share best practices through peer groups

If there's anyone who understands your business as well as you do, it's someone who runs a company like yours. Executives look in different places for information to help them run their businesses, such as local business leaders, business journals, books, and accountants. These sources are all useful, but they often lack a depth of understanding, empathy, or connection with your everyday business problems. While cross-industry advice is often invaluable, many executives seek out industry peers to discuss problems and exchange ideas and solutions. Formal peer groups have been created to answer that need.

If you meet a peer from your area, you may have common problems and ideas, but you are unlikely to share them since you might be interested in the same projects or looking to hire the same people. Executives need an atmosphere where problems can be openly shared.

Typically, peer groups consist of non-competing firms that are geographically diverse, with members from around the country. Peer group membership requires a commitment to improvement and a willingness to participate by sharing ideas and information.

The concern for fit or "chemistry" reflects the need for open, frank communication and the desire for all peer group members to benefit from the time spent together. Peer group meetings have a formal structure, with ambitious agendas that require strong preparation between meetings. Peer groups

usually choose to follow one of two primary formats—the audit format or the "best practices" forum.

Audit Format

The audit is similar to a business evaluation. It includes extensive information gathering and review, interviews, and a candid executive "out-brief". The audits are focused, invasive, and of extremely high value. Each peer audit results in specific recommendations that, when implemented, create great value.

Best Practices Forum

The forum is an executive roundtable with pre-selected topics and agendas. Topics are covered in depth and various best practices are discussed. Each company typically presents detailed descriptions of how their company handles a given topic. For instance, each company might discuss business development, operations, and financial performance.

Peer Group Benefits

Many benefits result from the peer group process. Ideas and implementation successes and failures are shared openly. These successes and failures offer guidance and ideas that ultimately help the peer group members grow and provide a higher quality of service to their customers.

Ultimately, many peer group members become good friends and advisors—providing a needed sounding board for the variety of challenges and opportunities that firms face. ☐☐☐

* Abbreviated from "FMI Quarterly" publication, 2003, Issue 1 "50 Lessons Learned in 50 Years."



the unified group honors airtight

The Unified Group, an independent association of 55 of the country's elite HVAC commercial contractors, presented its Member of the Year award to Charlotte, North Carolina-based AirTight Mechanical at the organization's Annual Meeting held November 8-11, 2006 at Paradise Point Resort and Spa in San Diego, California.

Greg Crumpton, president and founder of AirTight Mechanical, received the award because he and his company embody the qualities that define what The Unified Group stands for. Always active in all areas of the group since becoming a member in 2004, Crumpton has helped and contributed to training, marketing, membership, and business opportunities.

According to Julie Bishop, executive director of The Unified Group, "AirTight Mechanical was honored this year for their many contributions to the group. Greg is not only a strong advocate for our group, but for the industry as a whole. He's a true leader with a caring spirit, and he has created a unique company culture at AirTight because he is a believer in and a promoter of people. We're both proud and blessed to have Greg and AirTight as part of The Unified Group."

The mission of The Unified Group is to help its independent members increase productivity, profitability, and customer retention by providing training opportunities, information exchange, sharing of best practices, and negotiated purchasing agreements as well as a network to pursue national and regional business opportunities. ☐☐☐

the things we take for granted

It may be hot outside, but your office is a comfortable 75°F, thanks to ASHRAE's Standard 55. The standard specifies the combinations of indoor thermal environmental factors and personal factors that will produce thermal environmental conditions acceptable to 80 percent or more of the occupants. These environmental factors include temperature, thermal radiation, humidity, and air speed, while personal factors are activity and clothing.

To be specific, temperatures in the winter should range from 68-74°F, and 73-79°F in the summer, according to the standard. In addition to being comfortable, you also can be assured that your office has good indoor air quality, designed according to requirements in ASHRAE's Standard 62.1. The standard plays an important role around the world in providing for occupants' well-being by improving indoor air quality. The standard provides guidance for the design and operation of HVAC systems for a range of building types and functions. It includes minimum requirements for maintaining a safe, healthy, and comfortable indoor environment for building occupants.

If you are not as comfortable as you want to be in your office, you may need to have your systems addressed to ensure they are within the ASHRAE parameters. Please visit www.ashrae.org for more information and call AirTight (www.airtightvac.com) with any questions. ☐☐☐

healthcare gets an it facelift

AirTight recently completed the installation of two precision HVAC (CRAC) units at Loris Healthcare Systems in South Carolina. The installation was part of an entire IT/Data Center overhaul that will provide a renewed and updated facility. Our company has built a reputation for working in critical sites without causing disruption to the day-to-day operations, and this job was no exception. Special thanks to Ryan Gunto, Jason Arico, Dustin Drake, and Ron Carr for their hard work and dedication. The project was managed and co-coordinated by Russ Castilow. Great job to all of the AirTitans in the field and the supporting cast in the office! ☐☐☐

