



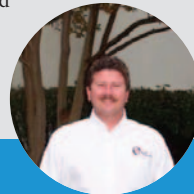
THE UNIFIED GROUP

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

Mark Pack / Selling Quality Service and Heat Removal, one BTU at a time!

If you have ever met Mark Pack, you will never forget him. Mark sells service, maintenance and retro-fit projects for AirTight. He is also one of the funniest and most vivacious people to be around. Mark grew up in the mountains of Western North Carolina, then moved to Charlotte to begin his education in HVAC and started his family here. He currently resides in the China Grove area with his wife Tami and their dog Lily, and several Harleys, which he and Tami both enjoy riding: He claims to have a pretty fair golf game as well. If you've never talked to Mark and need help with your mechanical systems, don't hesitate to call on him. You won't forget it!



At AirTight we strive to be a leader in the heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry. AirTight is deeply committed to customer-based relationships focusing on communications, quality and integrity. It's the only way we know how to do business.

AIR TIGHT

3515 Monroe Road
Charlotte, NC 28205
www.myairtight.com
704.377.3886



IN THIS ISSUE

- Keep Good People*
- HVAC Maintenance—Can You Afford the Low Bid?*
- Save Energy This Winter*
- One Link of the Chain*



KEEP GOOD PEOPLE

It's the last thing you want to hear—an important employee announcing that he or she is leaving. Perhaps it's to join a competitor, or to leave the industry altogether. Whatever the reason, you lose out.

A Last Ditch Effort

After this announcement, you may put together a deal to convince the employee to stay. Many times this tactic succeeds but only because the employee is flattered by the attention and because the employer has thrown money at the problem. These are short-term satisfiers. If the employee is dissatisfied with other aspects of the job, it's probably just a matter of time before he or she moves on.

Retention Strategy

Employee retention efforts should start when people are hired, not when they threaten to leave. Companies must recognize what employees want to achieve and help them meet those objectives.

First Day Ritual

The employee's first day is the perfect opportunity to remind him or her why your company is a great place to work. Create a first day ritual for all new hires. In addition to personal introductions, be sure to introduce the new hire at staff meetings or via email.

This is just one part of new employee orientation. Have the employee sit down and talk with each manager in the company. Be sure to provide written materials that he or she can review later. With all this new information as well as new faces, the first week at a new job can be a little overwhelming. Having an organized orientation program will impress your new hires and make a lasting, positive impression.

Motivators

Surprisingly, money is not necessarily the most important aspect of a retention strategy. The "bigger picture" often counts the most.

Everyone wants more money, of course, but once employees feel secure financially, their needs shift to enhanced self-esteem and self-actualization. Non-monetary issues—a boss who listens, recognition, being informed, opportunities for career advancement, and chances to broaden skills—become more important than their compensation. Showing employees their value and potential can be more effective in keeping good people than money.

Improve employee retention by following these guidelines:

- Don't assume anything. Too many managers assume they know what motivates their employees. Find out what new employees want and how they want to grow. Then help them structure a career path.
- Evaluate performance and set goals and objectives. Too many employees leave because they feel they never receive proper recognition.
- Communicate the results of employees' efforts. They need to feel like they know what's going on in the company.
- Finally, don't overlook money completely. Think in terms of total compensation: base pay, incentives, and benefits. All employers have to determine the value of a job and what they want to pay in their market. Then the employer must decide what total compensation program will fit all of the employees' needs and the company's budget.

Abbreviated from "FMI Quarterly" publication, 2003, Issue 1 "50 Lessons Learned in 50 Years." FMI provides management consulting, investment banking, and research for the worldwide construction industry.

HVAC MAINTENANCE—CAN YOU AFFORD THE LOW BID?

“It is unwise to pay too much, but it is worse to pay too little”
—JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

This quote is true of most products and services, but especially true when selecting an HVAC preventive maintenance program. Building owners and managers realize that their HVAC equipment requires proper maintenance and servicing. But how much should be invested, and when is a bargain not a bargain?

“Lower the price—no problem!”

If this seems to be the attitude of your HVAC service provider, there is a good chance you will be paying the price—and a steep one—for choosing the low bid. The unfortunate reality is that some contractors offer a low priced Preventive Maintenance (PM) program by simply reducing the time spent for planned maintenance. While the annual agreement price might seem attractive, is it really the bargain it appears to be?

Total cost of ownership

The fact is that the annual maintenance represents only one small part of the cost of HVAC equipment ownership. Other costs include energy consumption, repairs (parts and labor) and the cost of equipment replacement. Usually these other costs are the real cost of equipment ownership, and they are all directly impacted by the investment in preventive maintenance. Those building owners who choose to pay too little to maintain their equipment will inevitably pay much more in energy consumption, repairs, and premature equipment replacement. The worst part is they may never know until it's too late.

Selecting the best value

Like any investment, a PM program should provide a return.

Here are some tips to making a sound investment:

- Look beyond the price of the PM program, verify the tasks being performed and with what frequency.
- Conduct a thorough interview with each HVAC contractor.
- Ask for references. Call them to determine their level of satisfaction.
- Verify the qualifications of the contractor. Find out the tenure and experience of their technicians and their capabilities and training.
- Visually inspect for yourself the HVAC equipment on a periodic basis.
- Ask about ways to verify equipment performance. There are tools available that can analyze and document the efficiency and performance of HVAC equipment.

Selecting a quality preventive maintenance program from a reputable contractor is the best way to protect your investment and minimize the total costs of ownership.



SAVE ENERGY THIS WINTER

Improving the energy efficiency of buildings and industrial facilities this winter will not only save on utility bills, it will also prevent carbon dioxide emissions and improve the reliability of the nation's energy supply. By taking several simple steps, businesses can identify commonly overlooked areas for energy savings, save on energy bills, and help establish an energy management strategy that saves money year after year.

- Establish the energy use of your building(s) and set a savings goal
- Inspect heating equipment and perform monthly maintenance
- Turn back, or turn off heating and cooling equipment when not needed
- Get occupants involved
- Improve lighting systems

These steps represent a good start on real energy savings this winter. Keep the savings going with a long-term strategic energy management plan.

Source: www.energystar.gov



NEW TEAM MEMBERS JOIN AIRTIGHT!

Scott Friefeld, Dustin Drake, and Eddie Sain, all residents of Charlotte, have joined AirTight, a full-service heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor based in Charlotte, NC.

All three of these men will fulfill the role of field technician with the common goal of providing Charlotte based companies with quality mechanical service. Their commitment is to take care of your building so that you can take care of your business.

Also joining the AirTight team is Kate Flynn. Kate will fulfill the role of Dispatcher. She brings with her more than 6 years of experience in this arena, and Kate is dedicated to providing AirTight's clients with communication and information you can rely on.

Founded in 1999, AirTight service and technology works to reduce your costs. We provide up to the minute status on your account as well as accurate, timely invoices. AirTight: Good people you can trust, in secure environments where trust isn't a luxury its' essential.

ARE GAS PRICES REALLY MAKING US MORE EFFICIENT

Yes, we think so! As many of you know, AirTight operates a fleet of nearly 20 vehicles. This makes the AirTight fuel bill significant, even with the “old” gas prices. As a company, we have evaluated several ways to cope with the “new” gas prices.

- First, we are working doubly hard in our scheduling efforts, trying to ensure that we make good choices in dispatching our trucks based on everything from where the service calls are to where the technician lives, while balancing the urgency of the service required.
- Secondly, we have implemented a fuel charge to help compensate for the additional cost that we have incurred as fleet managers.
- Third, we are examining new vehicles that are an alternative to the traditional service van or truck.

Please know we are working hard to ensure that we spend your money wisely, while still upholding the quality, speed, and expertise that you have grown to expect from AirTight and our staff. Thank you for understanding our position during this unique time.

SO YOUR ECONOMIZER IS NOT WORKING

What does that mean?

The economizer can be a great part of an HVAC system. The concept allows your system to pull in cool outside air as the primary cooling source for your space or entire building if the outside air is cool and dry enough. These systems save tons (no pun intended) of energy by allowing the compressors to stay off-line while still maintaining comfortable conditions inside. If you are unsure of your economizer's effectiveness, or wonder if you even have one, call AirTight. We can help figure out what you have and the most efficient way to maintain comfort and save energy.

