

Recruit, Train and Keep Professional Technicians

Rob Falke

National Comfort Institute, Inc.



Content and illustrations © NCI, Inc. 2020



Recruit, Train and Keep Professional Technicians

We're here today because we're feeling the pressure of a shrinking workforce.



The Ugly Statistics (Average stats quoted)

- HVAC technician workforce is about **260,000**.
- Reported unfilled technician jobs are about **80,000 or 39%**
- Net technician loss is about **8% or 20,000 per year x 5 years = 100,000**
- By 2025 the projected technician shortage may be **180,000 or 53%**

Workplace Evolution

Changing Workforce:

During the 1950's, sheet metal workers stood at a workbench eight hours a day and fabricated fittings.

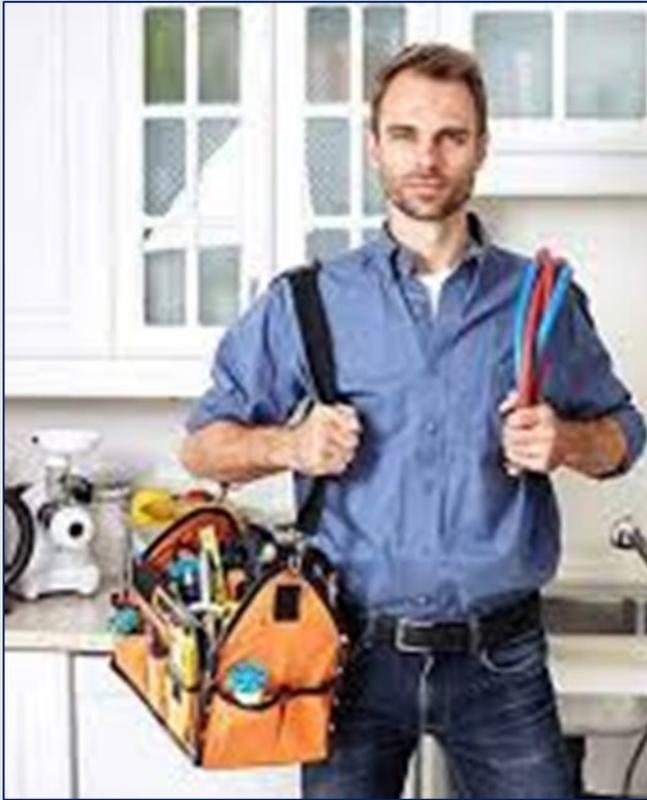
Talking was forbidden because it reduced efficiency and profitability.

Breaks were timed to the minute.

A radio was not permitted in the shop until the 1960's.



Fast forward to today's labor market – Technician's Wants



What do technicians want in a job?

- A career, **not just a job**
- Belonging and **purpose**
- Personal advancement, **contribution**
- **Training** – Certifications are their degree
- To know where **career** is headed
- **Millennials** – 20 to 35 years old. Makes up 50% of our workforce. Growing to 75% in 10 years.

Fast forward to today's labor market - Employer's Responses



What changes have you made to attract, train and keep HVAC technicians?

- Endless recruiting
- Defined achievable career path
- Signing bonuses
- Technology
- Increasing salary and benefits
- Training and advancement
- Relationship building
- Work flexibility
- **Hope of success as technicians define it**

Industry Problem, Company Solutions

Politicians and industry leaders seek to solve our workforce shortage attacking it as a social issue.

The most successful companies solve the technician shortage at a **local level** - Ideally, they become the kind of company the best techs want to work for.

Gallup poll – Only **34%** of workers in the US are engaged... involved, enthusiastic, and committed

...**66%** are looking, moving-on or very, very comfortable.



From the street – Contractor solutions

- **Dictators** don't have a future employing people
- **Increasing wages**, increasing rates
- **Defining career paths** with accountability
- **Making stronger commitments** to technicians
- **Requiring stronger commitments** from technicians
- **Make and keep individual promises**



From the street – Contractor solutions



- “Today many of you techs grew up without a Dad – **You’re it.**”
- “What you lack in company *appeal*, you **will** pay out in **higher wages**
- “What you offer in a job, **you must be able to back it up.**”
- “To inoculate your company from the current plague, **build careers to keep who you have and get who you want.**”
- We have plenty of technicians. Our problem is **we’re losing them** because we can’t hold their interest.
- A reliable tech **can get employment outside HVAC** - If they can be HVAC techs, they can do almost anything else...

From the street – Contractor solutions

“How can a company survive in the future, if theyre unable to attract technicians?”

“Consider attracting a new technicians like attracting a beautiful date...

What if you're ugly, smell bad, drive a beat-up van, and don't bring enough money?”



Recruit Professional Technicians

What attracted you and I to this industry, most likely won't attract today's technicians.

First, would you join your company?

A few simple answers to these questions will help you quickly assess your company and how it may be perceived by prospective employees.

Poaching

- “You can grow them, or you can poach them.”
- Poaching is best done ethically through your company's reputation. Team members automatically poach through their industry relationships.

Advertising and Application Process



"The goal of a job ad is to make a job seeker want to apply. That is the goal. It's not a list of your demands," Ryan Koehler.

- Engage new technicians with **simple online employment applications**
- 5 or 6 simple questions and a phone number
- Offer a labor position, you'll get...**laborers**
- Offer an HVAC professional position; you'll get...**professional technicians.**



Recruit Professional Technicians – Simple job application

Keep your application process simple.

Five years ago, the average US adult spent just over two hours on our phones...We now exceed four hours per day and use it an average 77 times a day

Online applications

- 78% of Millennials search for jobs on a mobile device.
- 73% of Gen-Xers search for jobs on a mobile device.
- 57% of Baby Boomers search for jobs on a mobile device.



Why level the playing field? Offer Scholarships

The average college scholarship is \$1000 to \$5000, and certainly doesn't include a job.

Calculate the cost to hire and train a successful service tech during the first 5 years of employment.

This bundle of educational benefits determines the value of the scholarship

Onboarding cost	\$1875
Uniforms, tools, and test instruments	\$3700
60 months of on the job training	\$8700
In-house company training	\$5150
Professional training and certifications	<u>\$5670</u>
Total Value of Scholarship	\$25,095

- Community Goodwill
- Attract Best Talent
- High Value Scholarship
- Immediate Employment

Recruit to your company culture – Face to face discussion



- Explain with **passion** your company's mission
- We **acknowledge and respect our technician's lives** outside of work (personal and sick time)
- How we **distinguish ourselves** from our competition
- The role you play in the **community**
- Describe the **difference between a job and a career**
- Goal setting and **recognition** as a team
- **Access to management** if they need to talk?
- Invite them to **interview current technicians**
- Be prepared to move at the **speed of trust**

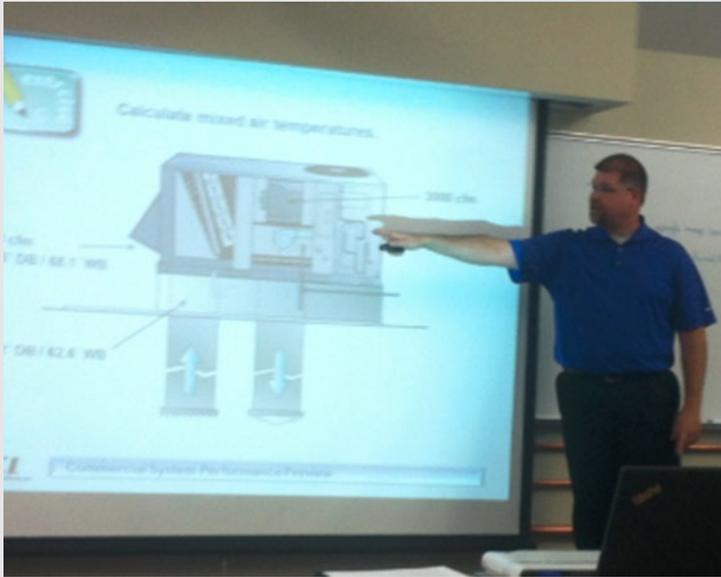
Train Professional Technicians

- Training equates to career advancement
- Advice from contractors
- Hiring people with zero experience
- Your success stories



Train professional technicians

Invest in and build skills for a **culture of excellence**.
personal growth and advancement.



Technicians report companies that provide ongoing training are among the **most attractive prospective employers**.

An investment commitment to the company's future and its team members.

Word travels quickly if you provide great training.

Receded warranty, **customer satisfaction** and retention

Training advice from contractors



- We use training as a **reward for outstanding performance**
- For those **seeking career advancement**
- Certifications **equal degrees** to many techs
- **Ask the guys** what training they desire
- Leverage **re-training** from those trained
- Increase ability to discover **more solutions**
- Re-learn the **fundamentals** – we all leak knowledge
- The more training, the **more money we both make**
- Keep the guys up with emerging technology
- Our **customers love all the certification** on the wall
- Avoids guys using **same 8 repeating repairs** of every job



Training - One training approach is Zero Experience

Angie Snow, Vice President of Western Heating & Air Conditioning in Orem, Utah:

“We look for candidates with a great attitude. Experience? Maybe. Education? Perhaps.”

“We are hiring people with zero experience, helping them get the education they need, and training them in a way we would like to have them trained.”

Who here today subscribes to this philosophy and practice?



Keep Professional Technicians – Advice from Contractors



What unique habits have you built to assure you keep your technicians?

- Build real **relationships**
- Immediate **rewards** with gift cards, from time to time
- **Coaching**
- Regular one-on-one conversations – Schedule lunch
- Appreciation and **acknowledgement**
- The feeling of importance
- Clear **boundaries** set for both of you
- Personal **accountability** running both ways
- Consistently **fulfilling promises** and commitments
- Apologizing when you don't

Keep Professional Technicians – Advice from Contractors

Hold exit interviews when a tech leaves to understand why you're losing people!

EMPLOYEE EXIT INTERVIEW

Name _____ Department _____
Supervisor _____ Position _____

- 1 Why are you leaving the company?
- 2 Please explain your reason(s) for leaving in more detail.
- 3 What suggestions for improvement do you have for us?
- 4 If we implemented those suggestions, would you return to work here?
- 5 Would you recommend this company to your friends as a good place to work?
- 6 I believe that I was treated like a valuable member of the company.
- 7 My immediate supervisor let me know when I was doing a good job.
- 8 I felt free to suggest to my supervisor changes that would improve my department.
- 9 My job duties and responsibilities were clearly defined.
- 10 I received the proper training in order to perform my job effectively.

Employee problems and complaints were resolved fairly and promptly in my department.

If I had questions or concerns, I felt comfortable speaking with:

My immediate supervisor _____



Keep Professional Technicians – Outside the box

Grant sabbaticals

Recognition for years of excellent service

2 weeks = less than .004 of 10 years of service

Offer when performance is high

Perhaps encourage sabbatical to earn a life goal



Support a work-life balance

A growing value in technicians today

Where appropriate, give freely, receive freely

Offer policies to provide for provide for life outside work

Discuss life outside of work

A flexible schedule is required if two working parents

Means of Keeping Technicians – Any success stories?



- **Recognition** for advancement
- **Pay for trade membership** and participation
- **Teach** other team members
- Healthy **competition** encouraged
- **401k** with matching contributions
- **Gift cards** aimed at an event
- Tools or **tool accounts**
- **Mentorship** programs
- **Bonuses** for certifications
- Attend HVAC **industry events**

Additional Reference Material

Recruit, Train and Keep Professional Technicians

<https://www.contractingbusiness.com/residential-hvac/article/20871108/recruit-train-and-keep-professional-technicians>

Attract New HVAC Talent – Offer Your Own Private Scholarships

<https://www.contractingbusiness.com/residential-hvac/article/20871140/attract-new-hvac-talent-offer-your-own-private-scholarships>

Recruit, Train and Keep Professional Technicians

Please visit us in Booth 153

NationalComfortInstitute.com



Contact Rob Falke: rob@ncihvac.com