

Over the course of 2009, this space will identify opportunities within customers' homes that you may not have observed in the past. The opportunities are based on a recent homeowner survey conducted by Decision Analyst, Inc.

Q: *What can we learn from the increase in public demand for portable heaters?*

A: The 2008 American Home Comfort study asked how many homeowners have "begun" to use spot heating. The response was just under two in 10.

Why do you suppose the market for portable heaters is booming? There are many possible causes:

- The economy
- The possibility of layoffs
- Recent escalation of fossil fuel costs then the down turn?
- Empty nesters with large houses to heat and cool
- Reduced personal income
- Trying to make up for retirement money lost in recent market slides

- Your technicians haven't told them about whole house remedies.

Regardless of the cause, this is a good time to review what you and your company are doing to provide consultative heating comfort services.

Ask yourself and your team the following:

1. What thermostat setting would you suggest for the customer who has decided to "spot heat" to ensure water pipe freezing and breaks don't happen.
2. Have you discussed new systems with higher SEER values, and the homeowner's savings?
3. Have you suggested zoning?
4. Have you built a relationship with your customers or
5. Do they have to look in the yellow pages to remember your name?
6. Do they call *you* for answers, or

do they call someone else—the retail store, their cousin, or the first company whose online ad they see?

HVAC contractors have a real advantage just waiting to be tapped. Other companies looking to meet your customer's home comfort needs (spot heaters, portable air conditioners, and portable IAQ) envy your ability to know all of your customers, and to help them plan for their home's updates, replacements, and needs on a personal basis. Are you making the most of your opportunity? The others have to rely on shotgun advertising that costs them large sums of money in hopes of selling their products around you. **GB**

Garry Upton, of Decision Analyst, Inc., shares his interpretations of its American Home Comfort Study of homeowners, and explores what customers look for in HVAC contractors. To learn more about this study, or to purchase it, contact Garry at gupton@decisionanalyst.com.