

Frequently Asked Questions

BY GARRY UPTON

Over the course of 2008, 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: *Some homeowners are finding some extra money in their budgets now that fuel prices have dropped. Could these funds be used for home comfort and Indoor Air Quality needs?*

A: After becoming a leading contributor to near global collapse, fuel prices are half of what they were during the summer, and you can once again rewrite your business plan for the first quarter of 2009.

Homeowners are doing the same thing with their household budgets. Now — hopefully for at least a season — gas prices won't take the place of other possibilities for the home. Given the effect energy conservation has on lower monthly expenses, this may be a stronger season than you expect. Be ready for it. Items to think about in addition to heating and cooling products —especially this time of year, when homes are closed up tight —are Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) prod-

ucts that answer many of your customer's needs for "cleaner air" in their homes.


Sick house syndrome, while not talked about as much, has not gone away, and for good reason. More people want cleaner air in their home than currently have it. A house should be a sanctuary, and yet many homeowners know that when they stay home too long they get headaches and/or allergic reactions to "things in the air" at home. They can be sold on products if they know about them. Remember that and most count on you as their consultant.

Here's the rundown on homeowners who may be interested:

- people with allergens are living in almost half (44%) of all homeowner-owned homes you drive by daily
- smokers live in 1/4 of all homes, and people with asthma are present in almost two in 10, or 17%
- more who reported they'd like cleaner

air using their central system live in homes valued between \$100,000 and \$300,000 and earn \$50,000 or more annually. They live in all sizes of homes

- those in suburban areas are slightly more likely to want cleaner air, but they can be found in the urban and rural markets as well.

Homeowners are not as aware of central system solutions as they should be, and one in three know it. With choices between portables (seen advertised and marketed *every day* at retail) and whole-house awareness limited to the exposure you give them, they've developed some interesting thoughts on what is out there. Talking to your customer as a home comfort/clean air consultant is a must. 

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.