



The Duct Man

HVAC Contractor News You Can Use



Residential HVAC Opportunities: Millions Will Continue Working from Home Post-Pandemic

Back in March, when the coronavirus pandemic forced our nation into a lockdown, tens of millions of workers began working from home. Though much of the economy-related news that's emerged since then hasn't been good, **remote work might turn out to be very beneficial for the residential HVAC industry.** Consider these facts:

- A recent poll found that **59% of adults currently working from home would like to continue doing so** as much as possible after the pandemic. Forty-four percent would be willing to take a pay cut in order to do so.
- Prior to the pandemic, about 4% of U.S. workers worked remotely at least half the time or more. By the end of 2021, **that figure is expected to rise to 25-30%** of the working population.
- Previously-skeptical employers are discovering that remote workers can be just as productive working from home, or more so, as they are in the workplace. A recent study in Asia showed at-home workers to be **13% more productive** than their on-site counterparts.
- **Remote work saves money for both employers and employees.** Global Workplace Analytics estimates that remote workers can save between \$2,000 and \$6,500 per year on things like gas and child care. Typical employers can save an average of \$11,000 annually on employees who work from home at least half the time.



So, what might this shift mean for the residential HVAC industry? Simply put, **more work.**



As millions more people begin working permanently from home as part of our "new normal", residential HVAC needs will evolve. Working from kitchen tables, cramped corners, sofas, and beds is far from ideal, so homeowner needs for more comfortable, conducive workspaces will rise. This means converting spare bedrooms, basements, attics and garages to home offices, much of which will require HVAC system modification or upgrade, or perhaps installation of separate split systems.

Increased hours spent at home means HVAC systems that, pre-lockdown, were mostly idle during the day are now in near-constant use, causing utility costs to rise, and poor system performance and comfort issues are more noticeable. As temporary remote work increasingly becomes permanent, homeowners will be motivated to fix or replace these faulty systems. Interest in ancillary IAQ items like air purifiers, electronic air cleaners, and humidification systems, as well as services like TAB (testing, adjusting and air balancing) is also on a marked rise.

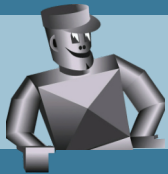
The fact that more people are working from home, with evolving HVAC and indoor air quality needs, is real. Filling those needs is an avenue that residential HVAC contractors should certainly consider exploring.

Could it Be That Interest in Skilled Trades is Rising?

A shortage of skilled trade workers has been a continuing trend here in the US for quite some time now, but a recent nationwide survey of 2,200 high school students indicates that **Gen Z may be more open to working in skilled trades than previous generations.**

- More than 50% of teens surveyed were open to something other than 4-year college
- 74% believe a career-based education makes sense today
- 67% said their success will be defined by focusing on what they enjoy, regardless of how much money they make.

ECMC Group, the nonprofit organization that conducted the [study](#), also found that paying back student debt was the top college worry of 72% of those surveyed. If we start encouraging, rather than stigmatizing, skilled trades and stop overemphasizing 4-year colleges over career and technical education regardless of aptitude, interest, costs, and other factors, perhaps one day soon we might see a reversal of the ongoing worker shortage.



CALLBACKS: Calculating Their True Cost and What Can be Done to Prevent Them

HVAC contractors know that callbacks can have a negative impact on business, but have you ever calculated exactly how much they cost you? A single callback costs hundreds of dollars at minimum, not to mention monetary losses due to a damaged business reputation.

An unbillable return service call to correct work on a job that has already been completed can impact profit margins in a number of ways. Dollar-wise, some fairly basic calculations can give you a good idea of what's lost on a callback. Factors include:

- Travel time and vehicle cost
- Time spent on the call
- Cost of materials
- Loss of chargeable business



Other callback costs aren't as easily quantified. These include loss of customers, loss of referrals, and loss of potential business through poor online reviews. For more precise cost calculations, HVAC-specific formulas can be found online.

Reducing the Number of Callbacks

Callbacks due to equipment malfunction usually can't be helped, but there are a number of things HVAC contractors can do to reduce the number of callbacks due to human error:

- **Training:** If you find you're being called back repeatedly on the same type of repairs, or if a particular technician has an inordinate number of callbacks, some retraining is in order. In fact, an ongoing training program should be built in to every HVAC business.
- Develop checklists to help service techs avoid missing details that can lead to callbacks.
- Provide incentives like bonuses or paid time off for service techs with the fewest callbacks.
- Review callbacks with the technician to determine what happened and how to prevent it from happening again in the future.
- Avoid overburdening technicians with too many service calls. Rushed, shoddy work results in excessive callbacks.

Don't accept the status quo when there are ways to improve your business and make it prosper. Minimizing callbacks is always a good place to start.



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