

Brag About Being Green

Make sure your business benefits from being environmentally aware.

BY MARK TIBBETTS

The HVACR industry has been emphasizing the environmental benefits of high-performance products, but less attention has been paid to how contractors can reduce the environmental impact of their businesses and then benefit from it.

Beyond promoting energy-saving products, contractors should explore ways to reduce waste generated by their operations through recycling, minimizing waste, reusing, and encouraging others (suppliers, customers, and employees) to do the same.

How to do it? Establish goals, create a plan on how to reach them, incorporate these processes into your business plan, and then include this information and ongoing results in marketing messages aimed at current and prospective customers.

Your business might already be doing some of these things. For example, high commodity prices encourage recycling of scrap metal; federal regulations require the reclamation of refrigerant; and many contractors recycle waste mercury thermostats through wholesalers participating in the Thermostat Recycling Corp.'s (TRC) programs. Now

it's time to reap the benefits by telling your customers.

According to a Boston Consulting Group study, consumers believe businesses can have a greater impact than private individuals in acting on green issues, particularly health and safety. Consumers

their efforts. For example, post your waste-diversion goals and performance on your website. Another example — collect data from your GPS system to illustrate how the system helps you to reduce miles traveled, a direct reduction in the carbon emissions your business generates.

As long as consumers remain concerned about the environment, being environmentally conscious will bring value to business. Capturing advantage from this trend requires contractors to think “green” not only in how they operate their businesses, but also in how they promote it to their customers. ■

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also *expect* companies to do so. Moreover, these same consumers are willing to pay more if they believe the product (or service) is better for the environment. Finally, the study also found that consumers consider businesses' environmental credentials when choosing where to buy.

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Post this on your website or include it in an online newsletter.

The recycling of mercury thermostats is another opportunity. Why not put a “recycling fee” on your invoice and then waive the charge? Not only does this remind your staff to recycle, it informs your customers of your company's environmental commitment. Also, if you routinely waive the fee, it gives the customer a sense of value from the service.

** Capturing the Green Advantage for Consumer Companies, The Boston Consulting Group, January, 2009.*

Mark Tibbetts is the Executive Director of the Thermostat Recycling Corp., a not-for-profit corporation supported by 29 manufacturers that historically branded and sold mercury thermostats in the U.S. TRC assumes all costs to transport and properly dispose of mercury-switch thermostats removed from service. Nationally, TRC has over 2,000 HVACR wholesale distributors collecting waste mercury thermostats on its behalf. For more information, go to www.thermostat-recycle.org.

About Thermostat Recycling Corp. (TRC)

TRC is a non-profit corporation voluntarily founded by thermostat manufacturers Honeywell, White-Rodgers, and General Electric for the purpose of collecting and properly disposing mercury-containing thermostats. TRC now represents 29 manufacturers that historically distributed mercury-containing

thermostats in the United States. TRC's commitment to collect and properly dispose of mercury-containing thermostats reflects its members' commitment to keep those thermostats out of the solid-waste stream.

Members of TRC fund the

program through annual participation fees. TRC assesses fees on a proportional basis based on the prior year's collections of member-branded thermostats.

Outside of a reasonable, one-time \$25 per-container participation fee, TRC assumes all costs to ship and process mercury-

containing thermostats collected through the program. There are absolutely no fees for contractors or homeowners to discard thermostats in TRC recycling containers.

The program accepts all brands of wall-mount mercury-containing thermostats.