

HVAC TACTICAL



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

JON ESQUIVEL

RECAP: AHR & the 6th Annual Awards Gala!
InstallerSHOW New York

Ask a Jerk **#6**

tech talk: *low ambient cooling*



Congratulations!!

Welcome to the **spring 2026** episode of HVAC Tactical Magazine.

A voice of the people.

When we rolled out the very first issue of the magazine, we had a vision to bring the voice of the trenches and the movement to the mainstream.

A magazine for the trenches, by the trenches.

Our goal is simple.

- Provide valuable, relevant content that our fellow tradesmen and tradeswomen in the trenches can appreciate.
- Build awareness of the movement happening on social media and highlight individuals making an impact in the HVACR community.

Content

If you or someone you know has great content that you'd like to see published in the magazine, feel free to reach out. We're always open to chat!

Email us at magazine@hvactactical.com

Digital Extras

Logos, QR codes, and highlighted interactions throughout the magazine connect to videos, product pages, social media profiles, and additional resources.

If you're reading digitally, tap the links. If you're holding the print copy, scan the QR codes.

@hvactactical



Be sure to follow us on social media and get plugged into the community!

Thank you for your support and welcome to the movement!

Ben Poole • Founder • HVAC Tactical • "It's A Mindset"

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rebekah poole



This InstallerSHOW was a special one for me - **I was so thrilled** to work with some of the American installers and social media folks. Hanging out with them on their home turf was an experience I won't forget"

Lee Brown
@thepeakyplumber



JON ESQUIVEL 46

Dan Vasytan

spring 2026

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THE UNSTOPPABLES



Ben Poole HVAC Tactical Founder

Ben Poole is an entrepreneur and 3rd Generation HVAC professional. He founded HVAC Tactical in 2018, the HVAC Tactical Awards in 2020 and the HVAC Tactical Magazine in 2023.

His goal is to simply elevate the industry, reignite the passion for the trade and motivate others to take on the personal responsibility of mastering their craft.



Matthew Pryce Editor-In-Chief

Matthew Pryce is a published author, professional musician, innovative digital marketing maven, and rabbit & traditional husband.

His work has appeared in the Sports Illustrated, The National Review, the NY Daily News, various HVAC publications, and of course, the **HVAC Tactical** magazine.

He is the vice-chair of the HARDI marketing council, and the Head of Marketing Communications for Centrotherm Eco Systems, a plastics manufacturer located in New York, and he dropped a solo album called "Wizard Music" this past October!



Rebekah Poole Advertising & Production Manager

Rebekah brings a strong foundation in sales, training, and process development from her years in the automotive industry. Known for her sharp eye and organized follow-through, she moves projects forward and smooths out the rough edges—whether in copy or production.

Raised in a family of contractors, Rebekah feels right at home in the trades. At HVAC Tactical, she connects sponsors and advertisers with opportunities to support the trades, spotlight technicians, and grow brand visibility that resonates.



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the HVAC JERKS



Ask A Jerk #6

Well, the snow has finally melted around here, or most of it anyway, and a new cooling season is right around the corner. Are you ready for it?

Don't wait to get up to speed on new products and procedures, and especially your truck stock. You know, there's nothing worse than getting to a job and finding out that all you have to do is swap out a bad capacitor and be on your way in twenty minutes, only to realize that you never replenished your truck, and now you have to drive 40 minutes to the closest supply house.

There goes half a day, and a bunch of lost profit. (Damn helpers!)

Dear HVAC Jerks,

I'm trying to streamline my truck inventory, but one of my problem areas is my capacitor bin. Either I carry a few very expensive multi capacitor kits, or I have to keep 200 cheap ones, but can never find the right one when I need it. Do you have any thoughts on this?

-Lightning in a Bottle

Dear Sparky,

I'm a big fan of carrying universal parts on my truck, and even though they're usually more expensive than the direct replacement part, you'll save in the long run. That being said, capacitors are one of those items that you can mix and match.

Just like using two 5 ½" nipples and a coupling instead of a 12" nipple, you can probably make any size single or dual capacitor you would need out of just a dozen, or so, common sizes. I'm not going to get into all of that right now, but if you check out some of the YouTube videos out there, you'll get a quick education on how to easily combine a couple to make up what you need for most situations, saving you lots of space on your truck.

Dear Jerks,

I started my own company last year, and I'm really trying to do things the right way, but there's an awful lot to know when it comes to the business side of things. Right now, I have two employees and I want to hire another, but a guy I know is being sued by someone he was trying to hire because of something on his application. How can I keep up with all of these stupid rules?

- New Green Owner

Dear Greenie,

Boy, **you're not kidding** when you say how difficult it is to keep up all of the rules of running a business, when they change quicker than the weather in Houston! Even more so when you get into some of the regulation heavy big cities.

So, when it comes to human resources stuff, you know, hiring and firing procedures, how to handle disciplining your employees that like to get high and naked in your customers' pools at lunchtime, and all of the non-wrench twisting stuff at work, you really can't wing it anymore. You have to much at stake to just take a guess at doing it the "right way".

If you're not big enough to hire a dedicated HR person (which you're not), look into outsourcing it. There are many companies that will set you up with the proper forms, handbooks, and procedures for virtually every situation for a very reasonable monthly fee and remove all of that from your plate so you can focus on what you're good at.

In other words, **leave that stuff to the professionals!**

Hey, Podcast Jerks,

My girl said she wanted us to spend more time together, so I started bringing her on some of my jobs. She complained a lot in the beginning because I was making her carry all of my tools, but she's getting used to it. But she still complains about getting dirty, and how I make her ride in the back of the truck sometimes, and that I'm not "romantic" enough! WTF?!? And, just so you know, when she saw me writing this letter, she started yelling at me and kicked me in the cohonies!!! What am I doing wrong?

-Now I'm a tenor

Dear Squeaky,

To be direct, it sounds like you were raised by my uncle Gravel back in the caves of Missouri.

You can't treat the one that cares about you and puts up with you burping all the time and cutting your toenails in the truck like you do. In fact, you're lucky she hasn't run away with the salesman from the supply house yet (you know he's been trying to seduce her with that new fancy line-hide that they're selling now).

No, you need to treat her with respect and even take her out to a special dinner once in a while, like to the local Chili's, and for gob's sake, **change your tee shirt** more than once a week!



winning the hvac talent war:

→ how to stand out

Hiring in the HVAC industry has never been more competitive. Contractors across the country are vying for the same limited pool of skilled technicians, installers, and project leaders. Signing bonuses, premium pay, and strong benefits packages have quickly become the baseline, not the differentiator.

So, when compensation looks nearly identical between employers, the real question becomes:

why should someone choose to work for you instead of another company down the street?

The answer lies in something many firms overlook: **employee experience and long-term opportunity.**

→ Create a Desirable Workplace

Today's workforce, especially younger trades professionals, are looking for more than just a paycheck.

Culture matters.

Small but **meaningful perks** can go a long way in showing employees they're valued as people, not just labor.

Consider benefits such as:

- *Paid birthday off*
- *Mental health or wellness days*
- *Family appreciation events / team outings*
- *Flexible scheduling*

These benefits are inexpensive compared to turnover costs but send a powerful message: we care about you beyond production numbers. When technicians feel respected and appreciated, retention naturally improves.

→ Develop your Employees

One of the most overlooked hiring advantages is helping your people succeed outside of work, not just within it.

A powerful concept many companies are adopting comes from the book *The Dream Manager* by Matthew Kelly. The idea is simple: when employers prioritize helping their teams achieve personal and professional dreams, engagement skyrockets. This doesn't require massive programs. Start by asking them questions like:

- *What skills do you want to learn?*
- *Where do you see yourself in five years?*
- *What financial or life goals are important to you?*

Supporting certifications, leadership training, financial education, or even personal development resources shows your team that you're committed to their growth, not just today's workload.

→ Build Clear Career Paths and Talk About Them Often

Many HVAC professionals leave companies not because of pay, but because they don't see a future.

Contractors who attract top talent clearly communicate growth opportunities from day one. Map out potential career paths such as:

- *Technician → Lead Technician → Foreman*
- *Installer → Superintendent*
- *Field Technician → Estimator or Project Manager*
- *Apprentice → Service Manager*

Then personalize those paths based on individual goals. Some employees want leadership roles; others want technical mastery or stability. When a technician can visualize their trajectory within your operation, they are far less likely to look elsewhere.

→ Lead With Purpose

The trades are evolving. Today's workforce wants meaningful work, mentorship, and leadership that listens.

Leadership that prioritizes coaching over command-and-control management creates loyalty that competitors struggle to match.

Regular check-ins, mentorship programs, and leadership accessibility help their workforce feel heard and supported.

In today's HVAC labor market, compensation gets candidates in the door, but culture, growth, and purpose make them stay.

Those who will win the talent war aren't necessarily paying the most. They're the ones building environments where employees can grow careers, achieve personal goals, and see a path worth committing to.

When technicians feel invested in, they stop looking for the next job and start building something lasting with you.



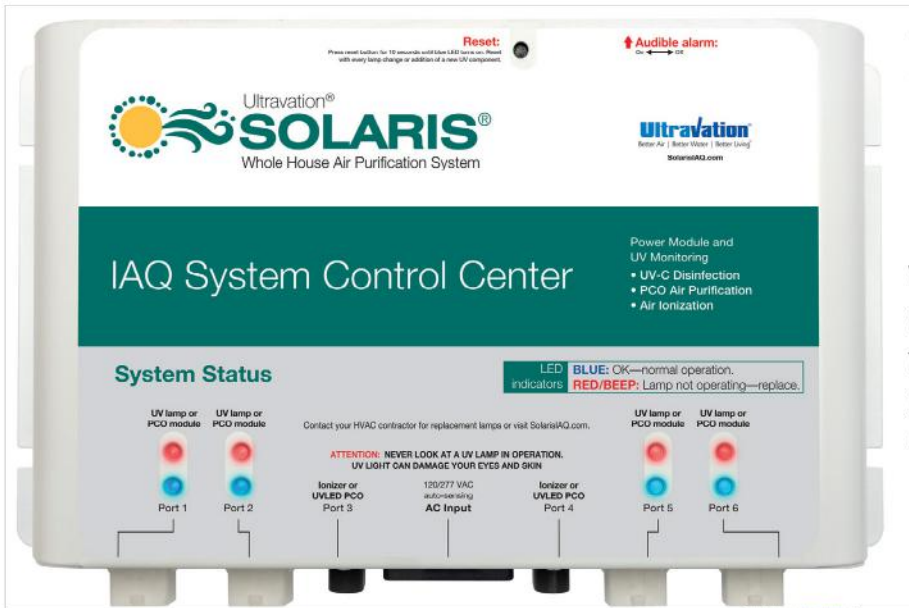
About the Author:

Liana Shkurman is a workforce strategist specializing in recruiting and talent acquisition for the skilled trades industry. Through her work with **People MVR**, she partners with HVAC, plumbing, and mechanical contractors nationwide to help companies navigate today's competitive hiring landscape and build scalable, people-first workforce strategies.

Liana focuses on helping contractors attract, develop, and retain high-performing teams by aligning hiring practices with long-term business growth and employee career development. She is passionate about strengthening the trades through smarter recruiting, leadership development, and sustainable workforce planning.



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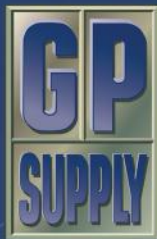


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It's a mindset!

HOMEPROS QUICK UPDATES

The residential HVAC market had a tough fourth quarter of 2025. Manufacturers Carrier and Lennox reported "over 40" and 32 percent year-over-year declines, respectively, in residential unit volumes during the quarter, driven by continued distributor destocking, softness in the housing market, and broader macroeconomic uncertainty.

Gas furnaces may hit the Supreme Court. Gas industry trade groups in January asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn an existing rule that requires all new residential gas furnaces manufactured after December 18, 2028, to have an AFUE rating of at least 95 percent, with the decision to hear the case now in the court's hands.

HVAC shipment volumes declined 20% in 2025. U.S. shipments of central air conditioners and air-source heat pumps for the year totaled just over 7.7 million units, down from roughly 9.7 million in 2024. While annual shipment volumes have grown steadily since the Great Financial Crisis, 2025 saw the fewest combined units shipped since 2016.

ChatGPT will open for advertising. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, announced that it will start testing advertisements in its popular chat tool, reflecting a monumental shift in consumer search behavior. However, it remains unknown when advertising opportunities for local service businesses, in particular, will be available.

Gen Z wants into the trades. According to a recent survey of 1,250 respondents aged 18 to 28, 60 percent are very or somewhat likely to pursue jobs in construction, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and related blue-collar trades in 2026, as the cost of traditional colleges continues to balloon and AI threatens many white-collar jobs.

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MORE THAN AN AWARD

how is Raising the standard from the Trenches Up

rebekah poole

The skilled trades are the foundation of modern civilization, yet much of the execution happens quietly—behind walls, above ceilings, and out of sight. When the job is done right, no one notices. No homeowner invites guests to admire their HVAC system or the hours of troubleshooting that keep their home comfortable and safe. Without skilled tradespeople, modern life simply doesn't function.

HVAC Tactical is changing how that body of work is understood—without cheapening it. These awards are not about popularity or polish. They are

about mastery, accountability, and leadership earned in the trenches. When recognition comes from people who actually know the craft, something powerful happens. Confidence grows. Standards rise. Responsibility deepens.

Seen by the Right People

For Jessica Bannister, 2021 Lady of the Trade and 2026 Influencer of the Year, that show of respect through HVAC Tactical mattered because it came from people in the field who understand what it takes to do this job well.



Rachelle Martins

Lady of the Trade 2025

“Winning an HVAC Tactical Award feels incredibly validating—to have my work and content recognized by people within the industry that I respect and admire so much.”

In a trade built on experience and trust, being noticed by respected voices matters. That validation reinforces the fact that sustained effort still counts—and that what happens behind the scenes is not invisible.

For Jessica,
distinction
created **forward
movement.**

It reinforced the credibility of her platform, opened doors to new collaborations, expanded her reach, and strengthened her confidence.

Most of all, it affirmed that contributing honestly and consistently has weight—and that her voice belongs in the trade.

Recognition Raises the Bar

Visibility like that raises expectations. It shines a spotlight that demands higher discipline.

2025 Mentor of the Year, Tim De Stasio, describes the impact of being nominated—and ultimately winning—as a moment of clarity.

“Winning Mentor of the Year made me realize my actions matter. The accuracy of my content is important, because I would not want to mentor someone to do things the wrong way.”

That sense of responsibility is central to the HVAC Tactical ethos. Honor like this is not a reward for past contributions—it’s a commitment to future benchmarks. When colleagues elevate someone’s contribution, it sharpens their focus.

Precision and integrity matter more.



Mentorship becomes a responsibility, not a role.

For Tim, the peer acknowledgment expanded his reach across the industry and beyond it. But more importantly, it reinforced that leadership in the trades means protecting the next generation by setting the bar high—and holding it there.

Momentum and the Ripple Effect

Dylan D'Amato, 2025 Hydronic Hotshot Winner and 2026 Nominee, views recognition as a catalyst, not a finish line.

"The nomination alone meant a lot. It reminded me [that] the work we're doing is being seen and respected by our peers."

Nothing changed overnight—but it reaffirmed his mindset around discipline and quality.

"It made me lace the boots a little tighter. It pushed me to lean further into quality over quantity."

That was validation that what he produced belonged among the best in the trade. It carried back into his local network, where it opened doors, built trust, and influenced decisions to partner with his team.

His name comes up as a recommendation—clear evidence that being seen within the trade carries real, practical impact.

This is how standards spread. When validation comes from others in the trade who understand the job itself, accountability rises. And for many, that responsibility doesn't stop with their own role—it extends to the people watching, learning, and following their lead.

That sense of responsibility is echoed by Alex Ivey, whose 2026 nomination for YouTube Channel of the Year reshaped how he views both his platform and his role in the trade.

Being nominated affirmed that the daily effort of operating in the field and documenting it mattered—and that people were paying attention.



"It changed my perception of how much impact these videos can have on the industry and on people coming into the trades," Alex shared. "There are a lot of people who trust me for advice, and I want to make sure I'm a good role model for the next generation."

Finding a Lane, Finding a Voice

For Francisco Pastor, 2025 Best Social Content Winner, the HVAC Tactical Awards marked a turning point he didn't anticipate.

He walked into his first award show shy, uncomfortable on camera, and unsure of his place in the wider industry.

What he found was community—real blue-collar talent, encouragement, and a culture that valued growth.

That experience helped him find a lane: creating educational content, collaborating with manufacturers, and building relationships rooted in mutual respect. It gave him confidence to contribute more fully—and to serve an audience often underserved in technical education.

The award didn't change who he was. It showed him where he belonged.

The Bigger Picture

Together, these stories reveal what HVAC Tactical is building.

What began in 2021 as three awards centered on acknowledgment and visibility has become something more lasting: pride in craftsmanship



and responsibility to a culture of stewardship, mastery, and peer-earned respect.

By honoring real-world impact and integrity, HVAC Tactical reinforces that blue-collar work is not background labor—it is skilled, essential, and worthy of respect.

When excellence is affirmed by those who live this craft, accountability rises, standards hold, and trust follows.

That recognition creates the pull the trades need—inviting the next generation to see the trades not as a fallback, but as something worth mastering.





[nomination info](#) ◆ [livestream video](#) ◆ [photo links](#) ◆

SEVENTH ANNUAL AWARDS & GALA



january 24th



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The Sixth Annual HVAC Tactical Awards & Gala

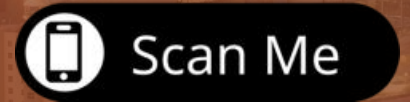
Sunday - February 1st, 2026 | The Sahara

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recap: hvac tactical awards & gala | las vegas nevada
rebekah poole



Roberto Villagomez



As the sun set on Las Vegas

Sunday, February 1st, the lights of the Strip weren't the only things shimmering in the desert.

Beneath the roof of The Sahara, sequins caught the light. Velvet jackets brushed past feathers and fringe. Flashbulbs lit up the red carpet as technicians, shop owners, mentors and manufacturers stepped inside.

Four hundred and fifty seats deep.

The room was FULL.

Applause rolled across the tables, while connections made online came to life in person. People rose and cheered for each other with genuine admiration.

The HVAC Tactical Awards were finally back in Las Vegas, where the "Blue Collar Goes Black Tie" idea first began five years earlier. Contractors and technicians from far and

wide arrived to mingle with sponsoring companies of all shapes and sizes, and to finally see each other—effectively turning digital friendships into handshakes and hugs.

Industry celebrities and heavy hitters were in attendance—from Insta-famous creators to the contingent from AHR Mexico; from INWIC representatives hailing from Britain, Australia & Africa to some of the most lauded mentors in HVAC.

Manufacturers enjoyed dinner with field techs. Mentors showed their apprentices what greatness could look like. People met their heroes. By the time dessert was gone, everyone had a story in common.

This was not a room full of strangers. It was the reunion of a growing family.

And the energy was electric.

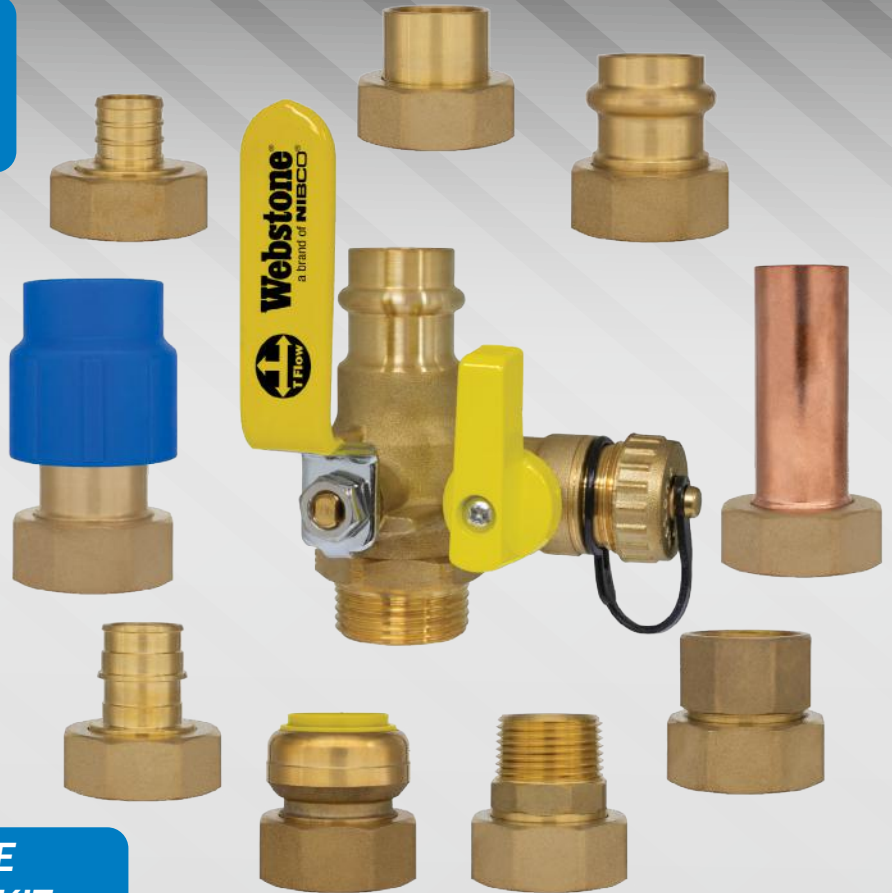


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Before the lights dimmed and the awards began, the red carpet was already buzzing. Ashley Lynds of Viper and Keith Keller of NAVAC Global greeted arrivals, capturing quick interviews and giving viewers at home a glimpse into the tuxedos, gowns, and anticipation filling the ballroom.

Gabriel Gonzalez and Josh Zolin entertained with lively back-and-forth while setting up the Podcast of Year presentation—then hammered home the point that it wasn't about "who talked the most" or built the loudest platform. It was about "who moved the needle"—who used their voice to educate, challenge, and elevate the industry long after the microphones were turned off.

Roberto Villagomez turned the front row into a rally section, rising out of his seat with full-bodied cheers that surged through the crowd—

Bobby Armstrong

especially for his friend Adam Nasser, whose acceptance speech for Best Social Content made clear how HVAC (and the support of his sister) changed his life.

When Bryan Orr stepped to the podium to present the Lifetime Achievement to John Pastorello, the celebration softened into something more personal.

He didn't just recount John's accomplishments—he honored the character behind them. The respect in his voice was unmistakable. With well-placed humor and genuine affection, he described his friend and mentor in a way that had the room laughing one moment and quietly reflective the next. It was measured, specific, and deeply felt.

John Pastorello of Refrigeration Technologies followed with the kind of acceptance only he could deliver. A quick nod to his "Viper Vixens" in Vegas (the



Viper marketing team, also in attendance) and a perfectly timed reminder that his wife was watching from home had more than a few people trying not to spit out their drinks in laughter.

Lisa Lyon of Webstone returned with last year's winner Rachelle Martins to present the Lady of the Trade Award. As she has every year, Lyon delivered a grounding reminder that representation in this industry isn't symbolic. It's earned.



Jessica Bannister

INFLUENCER OF THE YEAR

Jessica Bannister

@hvacjess

2026 WINNERS



LADY OF THE TRADE

Megan McIntosh

[@mechanicalenvironments](#)

HIDDEN GEM

Eduardo Espitia

[@hvacfooreal](#)

HYDRONIC HOTSHOT

James Blanchett

[@canuckmechanical](#)

LIFELINE

Jason Norman

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MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Holden Shamburger

[@hvactime](#)

PICTURE PERFECT

Matthew Harmon

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PODCAST OF THE YEAR

Gary McCreadie

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YOUTUBE

Itzcoatl Aguilar

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Adam Nasser

BEST SOCIAL CONTENT

Adam Nasser

@wolfofhvac

This year, that thread extended further. For the first time, a woman took home an award outside of the Lady of the Trade category. Jessica Bannister—previously honored as Lady of the Trade—claimed Influencer of the Year.

Canadian James Blanchett, winner of the **2026 Hydronic Hotshot Award**, leaned into a philosophy of bold effort. Quoting Theodore Roosevelt in his acceptance speech, he reminded the audience that this trade belongs to those willing to step forward, risk failure, and dare greatly:

“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”

Beginning with a joke he had promised his three daughters he'd make, Lifeline Tech Winner Jay Norman quickly shifted the tone, candidly mentioning the sacrifices his wife made so he could pursue his career. He reminded the audience that service work can take a toll—on the body, the mind, and relationships.

The room laughed. The room cried. The room stood on its feet.

Presenters and winners alike reminded everyone why they chose this trade in the first place. And for a few hours, the applause and spotlight gave way to something steadier.

While the 2026 winners walked away with hardware, every nominee walked away with something just as real: the respect of their peers.

Four years earlier, the scale looked very different. In 2022, one hundred and twenty people gathered in the tiny back room of a Las

Vegas Maggiano's. They were dressed up, excited, and a little stunned that something like this could even exist.

Now, in 2026, hallways crowd and the ballroom fills for a night that sells out. Every. Single. Year. That kind of turnout reflects a trade willing to invest in its own.

What began as a night to honor the work happening in the trenches has become one of the most anticipated gatherings in the trade.

An event like that doesn't assemble itself. None of the polish, production, or presence of the evening materializes without the steady backing of companies that believe in the technician community.

Forty-eight industry partners supported the 2026 show, allowing the HVAC Tactical Awards to gleam like a beacon in the Nevada desert. Their backing built the stage.

The rest unfolded in the room.

If you weren't there, the livestream will give you a peek into the evening—but it won't capture the conversations that extended beyond the stage.

It can't show the introductions-turned-partnerships, the ideas exchanged over drinks, or the relationships carried into the rest of the year. The sheer number of collaborations hatched in that hall cannot be captured on camera.

It happens again in January 2027. A frosty winter night in Chicago will host the next chapter. If you want a seat, plan early. If you know someone who deserves an award, don't keep it to yourself. Nominations open in May at hvactactical.com.

2026 Lifetime Achievement Award

Congratulations

John Pastorello

Founder

Refrigeration Technologies



John Pastorello's impact on the HVAC/R field is rooted in a rare combination: formal training in chemistry, hands-on experience in the field, and a refusal to accept products that "mostly worked" as good enough.

Early in his career, he recognized a persistent disconnect between scientific theory and

how HVAC/R systems actually behaved under real-world conditions. Those working in the field were often asked to rely on products that were poorly understood, inconsistently formulated, or promoted without regard for long-term system performance. As both a chemist and a technician, he understood the risks—and the opportunity to do better.

That realization led him to found Refrigeration Technologies in 1987 with a clear objective: to develop HVAC/R formulated products that were technically sound, field-tested, and safe. His early work focused on solving persistent problems rather than chasing trends.

It began with leak detection and expanded into coil cleaners, sealants, maintenance solutions, and specialty formulations professionals could trust.

Over time, that approach resulted in some of the most widely recognized products in the trade, including the Viper® line and the original Big Blu® leak detector. These were created to simplify the work and ensure it was done correctly, without compromising system performance or long-term reliability. Each product reflected a belief that chemistry should work with the system—not against it. He understood shortcuts often carry hidden costs.

ions!





For him, this philosophy was not merely technical; it reflected a deeper sense of accountability to the systems themselves, the people servicing them, and the manufacturers introducing products into real operating environments.

As the company grew, he remained closely involved in product development and technical education. Throughout his career, he was a tireless educator who believed professionals deserved more than instructions—they deserved understanding. Through articles, training programs, interviews, and industry discussions, he explained not just how products work, but why.

Topics many avoided, ranging from coil-cleaning chemistry to oil additives and system interactions, were approached with clarity and grounded in testing, observation, and measured judgment.

What truly set him apart was not only innovation, but a deep commitment to responsibility and transparency. He spoke openly about product limitations, proper application, and the role manufacturers play when introducing chemicals into complex mechanical systems.

In a field where shortcuts can be tempting, integrity consistently guided his decisions, earning long-standing respect across the HVAC/R community.

Nearly four decades after founding Refrigeration Technologies, his influence continues wherever professionals demand products that do what they claim and companies are willing to stand behind the science.

His work helped raise expectations across the HVAC/R product landscape, reinforcing the idea that reliability, education and integrity are inseparable. Understanding that principles endure only if they are carried forward, John intentionally entrusted his company to the next generation, confident that the foundation he established would continue to guide the work. Technical rigor, safety, and respect for the craft were never meant to be temporary; he intended them to last.

John's legacy is not defined by a single product or moment, but by consistency: a commitment to doing the work correctly, explaining it honestly, and respecting the people who rely on it every day.





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¹ VS. standard electric. Source: AHRI directory of 10/23/24

² VS. comparable water heaters without mixing valve at 120°F set and 58°F water temperature

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* Source: AHRI Directory 10/23/24

** Models with integrated mixing valve

† Based on the combination of all GEOSPRING™ features available vs. leading industry competitors

†† Requires 20V dedicated breaker



Cristian Parra

42 • charlotte nc

years in the trade

14

favorite brands

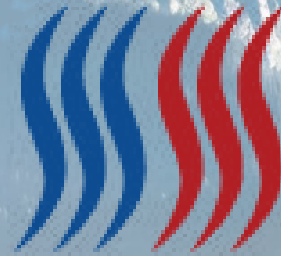
ge • milwaukee

hobbies

soccer • jui jitsu

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lead with respect,
and
never stop learning"



JOHN SADLER

PLUMBING & HEATING



Colin Sadler

50 ♦ surrey bc

years in the trade

33

favorite brands

centrotherm ♦ navien ♦

taco ♦ calefactio

hobbies

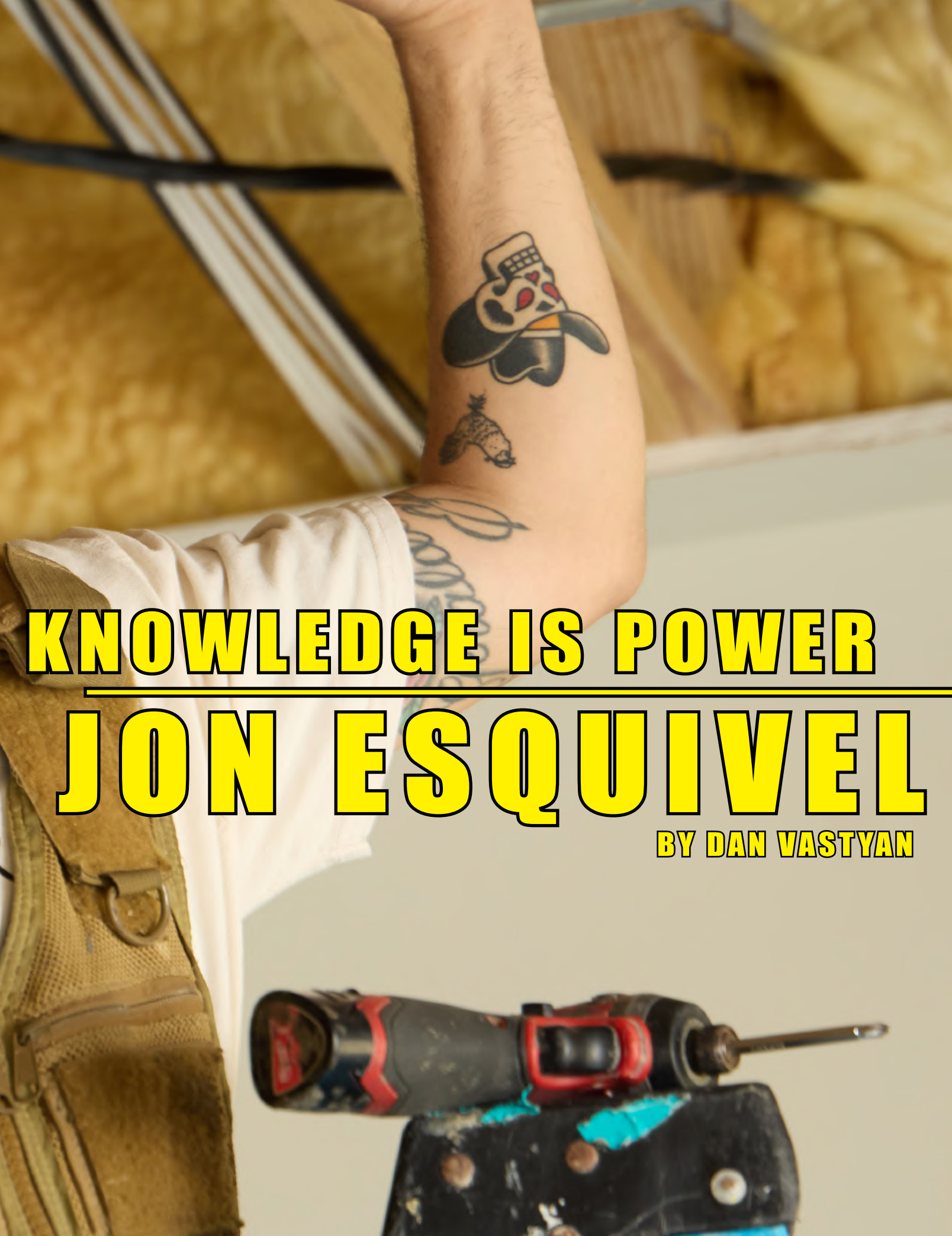
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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

JON ESQUIVEL

BY DAN VASTYAN

Knowledge is power. That saying rings true, but it's incomplete.

It should read: Knowledge is power... when combined with work ethic and the ability to execute.

Few people have pursued knowledge as relentlessly as Jon Esquivel, a 44-year-old born-and-bred Austinite.

He operates Austin Star Comfort Services, an HVAC, energy auditing and home health consulting firm



servicing south-central Texas. His role demands deep field experience and a mountain of formal training.

As his career progressed, Jon became increasingly aware of just how much there was to know, and how far he still had to go.

After high school, Jon headed to Army basic training at Fort Knox. There, he became a Cavalry Scout (19D). Then he served at Fort Hood with 4th infantry Division BRT, followed by a year at Conn Barracks in Schweinfurt, Germany with the 1st Infantry Division near the spa town of Bad Kissingen.

"We had a motto," Jon said with a laugh. "If you ain't Cav, you ain't s%*t."

"All in good fun," he added. "What we really did was drive around in Bradley Fighting Vehicles using thermal imaging to locate people or camouflaged enemy vehicles... and occasionally blow something up."

BadKissingen—affectionately called "Bad Kiss Again" by G.I.s — is also where Jon became a father. His oldest, now 23, has three younger siblings.

Civilian life

"When I got out of the Army, nobody wanted to hire me to blow stuff up," Jon said. "The easiest transition seemed to be law enforcement. I tried a stint as a security guard and hated it." Then he remembered... His grandmother had told him to talk to his cousin, who was an HVAC technician. She also told him find a good trade school and remember, "Education equals success."



"My cousin said HVAC is good work if you can handle heat and tight spaces," Jon recalled. "I asked him if he'd ever been in a Bradley with five dudes. Yeah, I can handle heat, tight spaces and bad smells."

Jon enrolled in Capital City Trade & Tech School's HVAC program, graduating in 2004. He took a job with a large national HVAC company doing residential start-ups.

"I learned a lot, including some bad habits," he said. "I learned how to be the fastest guy on the crew. Speed drives our industry right now, and speed forms bad habits in new techs."

Within two years, Jon advanced quickly. He was not only fast but had the fewest callbacks among the company's start-up technicians. At 18 months, he was promoted to senior tech, though without the pay bump. That left him feeling undervalued.

While his frustration was justified, the delivery of his complaint could have been better.

"We had a heated argument over the radio," Jon said. "Every company truck in Austin heard it."

He returned his van to the shop and confirmed what he already suspected: he was fired.

But not exactly. His manager thought highly enough of him to offer subcontract work the very next day.

Subcontracting and licensing

Working with a friend named Buddy, Jon spent the next several years learning subcontracting on new construction and residential retrofits.



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"I was fast, I was good, and I was a start-up tech," Jon said. "The companies I subbed for didn't need to send someone else to commission systems I installed."

Meanwhile, Buddy was trying to get licensed but couldn't quite make it happen. Jon decided to take a shot at it himself.

One contractor signed off on his hours. In 2007, Jon completed a prep course, passed the state exam with a 71 percent and earned his Master HVAC License.

Lots left to learn

Jon then founded Austin Star Comfort Services and immediately discovered how much he didn't know about running a company.

"I was a great tech, but I didn't understand business," he said. "The bad habits started biting me in the butt. I didn't know how to communicate well with customers, and I underestimated how many people would try to take advantage of a small business."

He began working with warranty companies. The pay was low, but the education was priceless. He learned how to respect homeowners, ask better questions and understand how deviations from code can come back to haunt you.

One lesson was especially painful.

A house flipper insisted Jon install ductwork in a garage conversion according to their design. Jon didn't like it, but assumed it would function adequately. It didn't.

After the home was sold, an auditor inspected the system and gave Jon an ultimatum: replace the ductwork or risk Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation investigating the issue and having fines issued on his license.

Instead of arguing, Jon asked where he could learn proper system design.

"I joined National Comfort Institute (NCI) to learn system diagnostics, duct optimization, performance testing and high-performance retrofits," Jon said. "The more I learned, the more I realized how much I didn't know."

He pushed hard into performance testing, perhaps too hard. He was one of the only contractors testing systems in Austin, but he was selling it wrong.



The phone stopped ringing.

To generate income, he bought a carpet cleaning company and began doing water extractions while taking more educational courses with the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC). This eventually brought him back into contact with the same auditor.

"I told him I wanted to know what he knew so I could become the best HVAC pro in Austin," Jon said. "He told me to join the Building Performance Institute (BPI)."

For several years, Jon immersed himself in building science: how homes operate as systems, how materials affect occupants, and how heat, moisture and particulates move through a structure.

Today, his certifications from NCI, BPI, IICRC and NATE (North American Technical Excellence) span system performance, air balancing, combustion analysis, duct design, infiltration and leakage testing, building analysis, residential A/C and heat pumps, structural drying, odor removal and restoration.

Auditing ambitions

Armed with new knowledge, Jon purchased a blower door and duct tester and set out to become the best energy auditor in Austin.



"In my first month, I failed 90 percent of the homes I tested," he said.

The phone stopped ringing again. But another door opened.

In 2015, his certifications caught the attention of the local utility, which hired him to conduct home performance for Energy Star programs and the Texas Weatherization Assistance Program.

"The work was prescriptive," Jon explained. "We were chasing metrics and using rules of thumb. I confirmed what I suspected: it wasn't real comfort."

Through an online community of auditors,

HVAC Contractors and building professionals, Jon embraced a case-by-case, diagnostic approach.

"That group taught me that you have to spend real time talking with homeowners," he said. "I slowly walked away from the energy program work. I didn't believe in it anymore."

The transition wasn't easy. Contractors he audited for didn't always appreciate his blunt assessments. Doing the job thoroughly cost him business.

"It was uphill for a while," he admitted.

Doing It Right

Jon realized that if he was going to do his best work, it would be on his terms. It would be for clients and professionals who valued properly designed and installed systems.

He began designing HVAC systems for other contractors as a consultant while continuing high-end new construction installs and selective service work.

Along the way, industry groups and mentors helped sharpen his direction. Encouraged by instructors in the HVAC community, Jon began teaching with the Texas Air Conditioning Contractors Association.

"One mentor told me that you can't become a master if you don't teach," he said.

Becoming a Specialist

Today, Austin Star Comfort Services focuses on diagnosing and correcting unhealthy homes. If homeowners are chronically ill, uncomfortable or battling persistent odors, Jon identifies the root cause and provides a solution.

"As a subject-matter expert, I push back on builders and contractors when necessary," Jon said. "HVAC pros often take the blame for issues that originate elsewhere: poor sealing, insulation or design. The code enforcement guys are clueless to HVAC in modern buildings and how the house works as a system. Some builders force HVAC contractors to do things the wrong way."

In addition to auditing and doing new construction installs, Austin Star Comfort Services fixes about 20 unhealthy homes each year.

"I'm different because I'm one of the small guys," said Jon. "I'm happy. I'm busy year-round. I don't have the stress of ten trucks. I can take my kids to school and pick them up in the afternoon."

"Austin Star Comfort Services is a specialty business," he continued.

"We're doctors, not ambulances."

Ambulances are necessary, but that's not my role."

**"dirty hands,
clean money"**

Jeison Miranda

41 • broomfield co

years in the trade

17

favorite brands

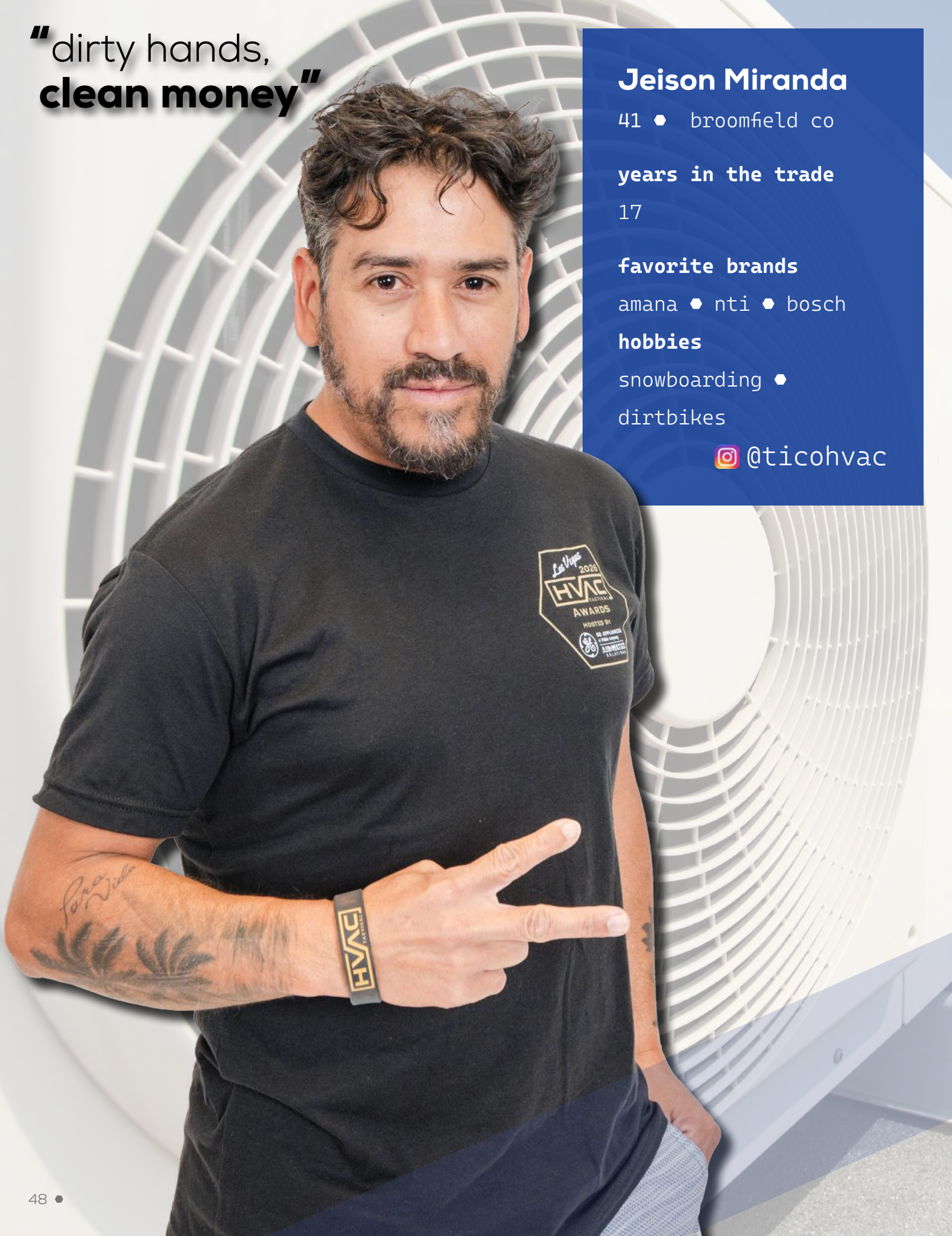
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hobbies

snowboarding •

dirtbikes

 @tico HVAC





Billy Veselinovski

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years in the trade

20

favorite brands

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hobbies

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From Breakthrough to Workforce: → Inside AHR's Innovation Awards



INNOVATION
AWARDS



Created in 2003, the AHR Innovation Awards weren't just another way to spotlight clever engineering (though there is that). The initiative was meant to highlight brands creating solutions that don't just impress on paper—but perform where it counts.

An industry gathering since 1930, the AHR Expo has deep roots in the trade. That perspective allows it to evaluate what innovation looks like in real-world execution—not just in theory.

Advancements have to hold up under load. They have to make sense in mechanical rooms, on rooftops, in design plans and service trucks. That's what separates novelty from consequence—and it's what the Innovation Awards are designed to measure.

Every submission is stripped of branding before it ever reaches a judge's desk. No logos. No marketing copy. No reputation points. The product stands on its own merits—its engineering, its application, its tangible results.

In an industry where large and small manufacturers share the same floor, that matters. It levels the playing field and reinforces what the awards were created to do: identify real breakthroughs, not the loudest message.

Products are evaluated by the very people living inside the problems they aim to solve. This means the judges aren't the same year to year. They're the people running in that particular lane—evaluating new solutions from inside the work itself.

They consider more than surface-level innovation.

- Does it solve a real problem?
- Improve a process?
- Deliver measurable impact in the field?

The story here doesn't end there.

The entry fee may be modest, but collectively it becomes meaningful. Each submission supports AHR's Workforce Development initiative, directing those entry fees into technical education. In 2026, \$25,000 was given to Central Technical Training Academy, a high school in Las Vegas preparing students for careers in the trades.

New technology doesn't just improve systems—it reshapes the job market. As automation improves, controls get smarter, and companies look for more efficient ways to operate (hello, AI), new lanes begin to open. And those lanes require trained professionals to fill them.

These awards help fund the workforce-to-innovation pipeline that sustains the industry. It's a loop. And it works.

During a closed Monday evening ceremony in Las Vegas, HVACR leaders and product teams gathered to recognize years of work brought to life.

Category winners included Honeywell, Daikin, Copeland, Sharp, IDC Fluid Control, Rebar, Blue Frontier, CSG Compressors, and ABB.

Blue Frontier took home the prestigious Product of the Year Award, with CEO Dr. Daniel Betts saying,



"When it was announced that we won Product of the Year, I could only think of the audacity of my team...A tiny group of people with the seemingly naive conviction that we can do things better and without compromises."

Dr. Betts' words go on to highlight how the nuts and bolts of developing a product must align with the people involved and the gumption to birth it into reality. He describes that alignment as magic.

These aren't incremental upgrades for the sake of release cycles. Many of these products represent years of development, iteration, and testing—built to solve real constraints in cost, compliance, and labor.

Some development cycles span two years. Others five. Some stretch close to a decade. Teams collaborate across time zones and disciplines, refining, testing, adjusting.

Innovation is rarely a single breakthrough moment. It is persistence brought to life.

That Monday evening reception becomes recognition not just of a product, but of the years of problem-solving behind it.

For manufacturers, these awards signal more than applause. Because AHR has evolved alongside the HVACR industry

for nearly a century, the awards carry credibility with distributors, contractors, engineers, and facility managers who rely on AHR as a trusted touchpoint. It tells the field that this product has been vetted by experts who understand how it performs under real conditions.

In a crowded marketplace where claims are plentiful and proof can be scarce, an Innovation Award functions as a benchmark. Not simply a marketing asset—but a signal of substance.

More than celebrating what's new, they represent a full-circle moment—where problem-solving meets practical application, where recognition meets responsibility, and where innovation directly contributes to building the next generation of the workforce.

In a trade built on precision, performance, and applied execution, that kind of distinction matters.

From blind judging to crystal award, from bold ideas to measurable shifts, from engineering labs to workforce classrooms.

The AHR Innovation Awards represent that full arc.



AHR dissecting the biggest tradeshow in the hemisphere



The stickers have been stuck, and the free t-shirts and hats have all been folded and racked – the post tradeshow ennui has set in.

For some of us (me), the cathartic feeling knowing the biggest tradeshow of the year is in the rearview is welcomed. For others, they're already counting the days to the next big annual vacation.

AHR took place in Las Vegas in early February, and it counts almost 2,000 manufacturers and parts suppliers as exhibitors. Three days really isn't enough

time to meet, greet, and learn at every booth – but it's a heckuva effort trying.

Right from AHR:

The AHR Expo brings the entire HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration) industry together to showcase cutting-edge products and technologies, gain insights from industry leaders, foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, and drive business and career growth.

Personally, this was my **10th AHR** – which still makes me a newbie compared to some, but a grizzled veteran compared to others.

I've also experienced AHR from both sides of the vendor booth, having walked the show, and even participated in various contests,



giveaways, and manufacturer events on the tradeshow floor – so I’ve had quite a varied AHR experience over the years.

Obviously, in recent history, there was a strange dark cloud during the dreaded COVID era, where all large group gatherings were heavily impacted.

In the last two years, however, the return to form has been more of a volcanic eruption of pure energy rather than business as usual.

Particularly, 2025’s Orlando show and this year’s expo in Las Vegas, in my humble opinion, were spectacular events. The Monday evening Taco Party (off the hook, as always) is considered a staple of AHR, and the HVAC Tactical Awards gala on Sunday has become a cornerstone of the week – kicking off the AHR proceedings on an extremely high note.

Tradeshows are what you make them. For some people, it’s a nonstop research mission; for others, a fun party with friends.

Manufacturers hope it’s a combination of both of those things, and AHR sold out of vendor spots incredibly quickly this year. For its vendors, they definitely delivered significant foot traffic in kind. My personal experience this year was of a bustling, exuberant group in good spirits, enjoying all that Las Vegas has to offer while remaining focused on the trades and business at hand where appropriate.

As I am openly willing to discuss, I have mixed feelings about tradeshows from a budgeting and ROI perspective. For manufacturers, they can produce very amorphous outcomes. A lot of what is easily achievable is difficult to measure – for example, a

large ostentatious booth setup will quickly bolster one’s corporate brand, but it may not elucidate the least bit of information about a new product or feature being demonstrated therein.

Further, the show floor is loud and chaotic. Having meaningful conversations can often be difficult when each participant is forced to shout over the general cacophony of the convention center. If there is a bit of a learning curve on a new product, the AHR floor might not be the best place to attempt to get that training to sink in and stay.

Conversely, from a statistical perspective – it’s a no-brainer. It’s a centralized hive of interested professional installers, most of whom are eager to learn and improve their business through the innovations they learn about at the show.

At AHR, a manufacturer can be in all corners of the planet at the same time because it has become an international showcase. Attendees and vendors alike come from great distances to take part.

We live in a global society now, and AHR is a microcosm of the global trades. Technology from every corner of the earth is present on the show floor, and attendees also trek in from across the map to walk those hallowed halls.

And since manufacturers know there is a built-in crowd, there are always fun satellite events to try wiggling into. The Taco Party and the HVAC Tactical Awards gala are only two examples of the festivities. This year alone, there were dozens of available side

← an international reunion happens on the AHR floor

(left to right: Lee Brown, Matthew Pryce, Bruno Friedman, and Aiden Divilbiss)

quests for AHR attendees.

The following statement is pretty much true of any excursion, but: AHR is what you make of it. You can keep your nose to the grindstone and pore over as many booths as possible, soaking up technical information and planning future installations – or you can pal around with friends, meet new people, and turn it into a fun social event.

To their credit, **AHR has grown to such heights** that it can be all things to all people.

Next year, Taco, HVAC Tactical, and AHR return to Chicago – a city that has hosted the expo many times over the years. The afterparties will be very different in the bitter cold of the Chicago winter, but rest assured – there will always be new things to learn and fun to be had.

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Matthew Pryce

Editor-In-Chief • HVAC Tactical Magazine
Head of Marketing Communications • Centrotherm
10 time AHR Attendee



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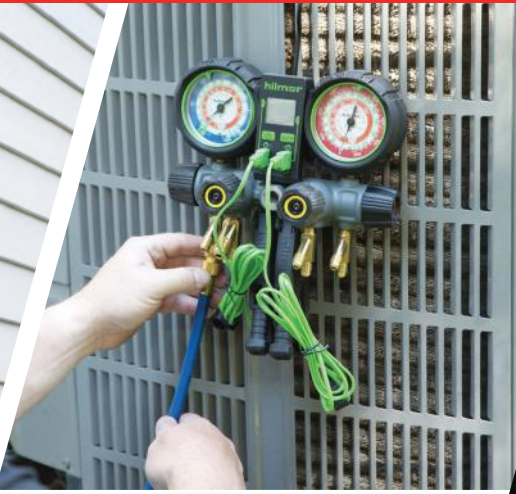


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Champions Group strikes \$2.5B Blackstone Deal

Residential HVAC, plumbing, and electrical platform Champions Group will be acquired by private equity giant Blackstone, the companies announced in February.

Why it matters:

The deal marks the first major platform-level residential HVAC transaction since May 2025, when Redwood Services received a majority investment from Altas Partners in a ~\$1.1 billion deal, as Homepros previously reported.

What's happening:

The transaction values Champions Group at approximately \$2.5 billion, based on an annualized EBITDA figure of roughly \$140 million at a multiple of around 18.5x, according to people familiar with the matter, who requested anonymity as the financials are confidential.

Investment banks William Blair, Piper Sandler, and Baird advised on the deal. Representatives for Champions Group declined Homepros' request for comment, and Blackstone didn't return a request for comment.

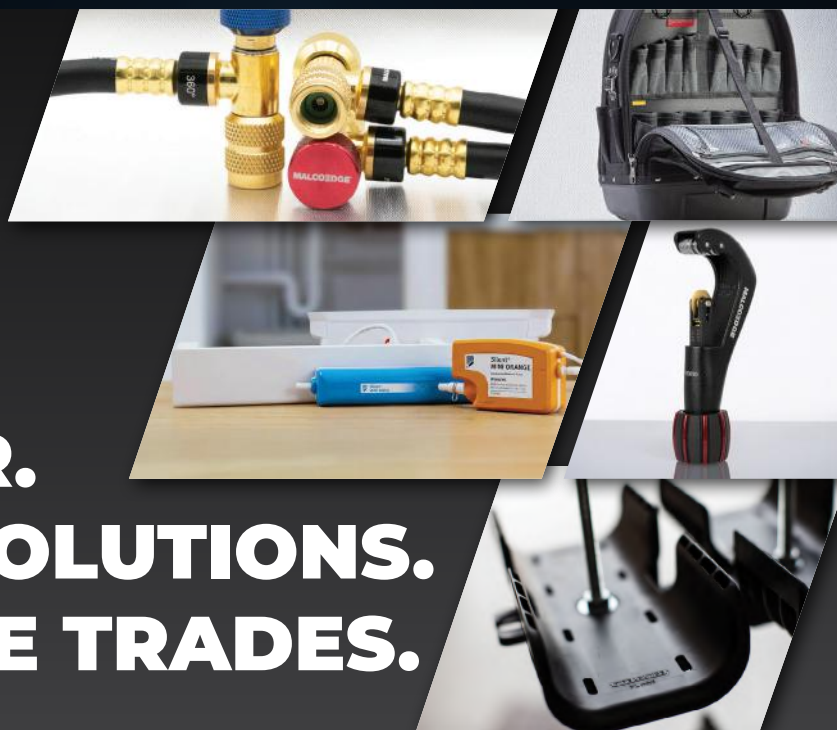
Zoom out:

In 2021, private equity firm Odyssey Investment Partners acquired California-based Service Champions, which had grown to include several other contracting brands since its founding in 2000, for an undisclosed sum.

Two years later, in August 2023, the company rebranded as Champions Group and now operates 23 brands with a primary focus on the Southwest, according to its website.

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What they're saying:

"With Odyssey's backing, we built one of the premier home services companies by empowering local leaders, investing in great teams, and earning customer trust,

As we enter our next phase, we believe Blackstone's resources and expertise will help us accelerate growth, strengthen our market leadership, and continue raising the bar for the home services industry."

- Frank DiMarco
CEO, Champions Group

Looking ahead:

Odyssey and Champions management will retain "significant" minority stakes, according to the announcement. The transaction is expected to close by mid-year.

The big picture:

The deal, which ends the nearly year-long dry spell, could set the stage for similar platform-level transactions this year, several sources say.

About the Author

Alec Stevanovski is the editor of Homepros, a digital news company covering the residential and light commercial HVAC and plumbing industries.

Homepros publishes news, trends, analysis, and commentary via email newsletters and online, three times a week. Alec previously worked at Payzer, an HVAC and plumbing-focused software company, on the sales team.



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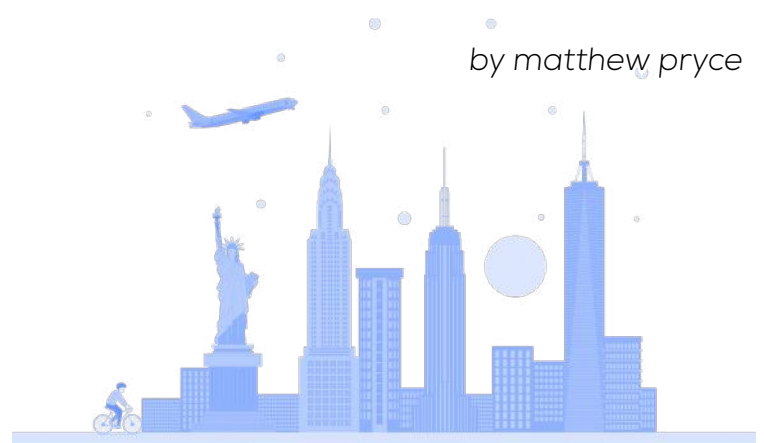
Supco® P/N	Description
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Supco® P/N	Description	Supco® P/N	Description
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LCCR2210	10 PC R22 Safety Locking Cap Cover	LCCR2250	50 PC R22 Safety Locking Cap Cover
LCCR410A10	10 PC R410A Safety Locking Cap Cover	LCCR410A50	50 PC R410A Safety Locking Cap Cover

installer SHOW

**If you can
make it there,
you can make it anywhere.**



Bruno went to a Knicks game. I saw pics of people touring the Statue of Liberty and Central Park, from Broadway, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art - even from the St. Patrick's Day Parade!

For a few days, the Javits center was home to InstallerSHOW, a UK-based hvac and construction exhibition.

New York City has a lot to offer - it's the capital of the world, after all. For a few days, the city that never sleeps, had a few more insomniacs roaming the streets.

InstallerSHOW has been happening for years in 'ol England, but this was the first time in North America, and they took a big bite out of the Big Apple.

All the out-of-town visitors took in loads of different sights and smells, but they all had one thing in common: InstallerSHOW New York, live and direct from the renowned Jacob Javits center.

With three stages, and two separate shows (InstallerSHOW New York and New York Build 2026 cohabitated at the JJ center), all your favorite manufacturers, top social media folks, professional trainers, new product and technical

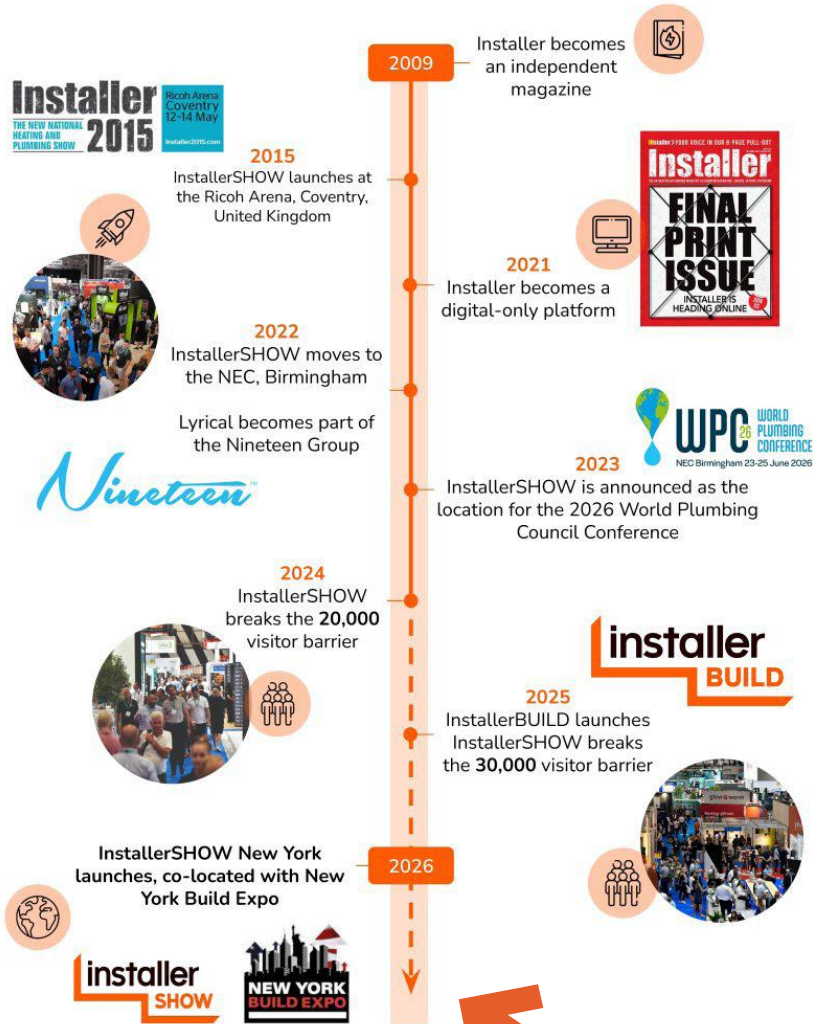


showcases, and so much more - were happening simultaneously,

For a few days, the Jacob Javits Center belonged to the trades.

This show had all the trappings of the great tradeshows we love stateside, but a few lovely bits brought over from across the pond. Personally, the live musicians added some nice ambience inside the halls.

Who doesn't want to groove to some sultry saxophone as you saunter between stands? I sure do - and I love learning the international lingo too. It's a stand, not a booth.



A Bit of Backstory.

YOU ARE HERE

InstallerSHOW has a funny inverse timeline compared to ours here at HVAC Tactical.

For us, the show came before the magazine. Installer started as an independent magazine in 2009 before launching the show in 2015 in Coventry, UK. Now, annually, it's in Birmingham - that's where it's scheduled for this coming June.

Straight from their website: putting the audience first, InstallerSHOW strives to provide visitors with a great atmosphere, interactive experience, comprehensive live content, access to the latest products and training, and a fantastic day out.

Like so many legendary pizzerias around the city, they delivered.



With plans on future shows on multiple continents, InstallerSHOW is going big while remaining true to their roots back home.

Throughout the week there was great buzz for the show in Birmingham, only some of which focused on Lee's birthday.

We took a ton of pictures, recorded a bunch of video, and two **Behind the Mindset** podcasts – be on the lookout for episodes featuring Dylan D'Amato and Eric Aune coming out in the near future.

Attendees left InstallerSHOW New York

with great new product info and contacts made at the various booths on the floor, and, I think, a lot of people left with a very different impression of New York City.

I confess – that's my home. I was born in the Bronx in the year [redacted]. No matter where I roam, New York City remains the beating heart of the planet for me and definitely many others. It's a perfect microcosm of America offering something for everyone.

InstallerSHOW fit right in.

They can make it there.





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cooling when it's cool outside: an introduction to low ambient cooling

lianna schwalenberg

What is “Low Ambient” Cooling?

When it is cold outside, technicians may run into concerns regarding when it is safe to turn on the compressor and at what ambient temperature. A common rule of thumb is to avoid running mechanical cooling if it is colder than 50–60°F outside unless the equipment has some type of “low ambient cooling” accessories. Low ambient cooling is a broad term used to describe methods designed to protect the compressor in applications where cooling is needed all year long, such as server rooms, data centers, pharmaceuticals, dispensaries, supermarkets, food processing, and industrial dehumidifiers.

How Physics Can Explain the Problem

HVAC equipment of today relies heavily on principles of physics discovered in early 19th-century France. Building off the work of Jacques Charles (who discovered that hot air expands), chemist Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac formalized what is now known as Gay-Lussac’s law of pressure-temperature proportionality. This law states that the pressure of a gas in a fixed, constant volume is proportional to its temperature. In other words, a gas’s pressure increases with an increase in temperature and decreases with a decrease in temperature. This relationship holds given that its volume, the container it is in, stays constant. Because refrigerant is a gas trapped in a fixed system, it follows these principles of physics. When it is cold outside, the refrigerant reacts to this drop in temperature by dropping its pressure.

The Importance of Head Pressure

Refrigerant pressure is highest at the discharge of the compressor, and it remains at a relatively high pressure through the condenser, even as it is rejecting heat. The system is able to reject heat when the outdoor temperature is colder than the condensing temperature of the refrigerant. However, if the outdoor temperatures are significantly colder, the system rejects too much heat to the point where head pressure is lost. This causes the expansion valve to struggle feeding the evaporator.

Mechanical cooling operates on the system’s head pressure being high enough to “push” refrigerant into the expansion valve. Pressure difference across the expansion valve is key to whether it will properly feed the evaporator with the right amount of refrigerant. If the expansion valve does not receive a sufficient head pressure, it will tend to underfeed the evaporator. A starved evaporator can lead to a reduced cooling effect, but a more ominous effect of head pressure loss is the damage it can do to the compressor.

If the head pressure of the refrigerant drops low enough, it can migrate into the compressor crankcase during the off-cycle, causing flooded starts. Loss of head pressure also causes the compressor to operate at dangerously low compression ratios between its head and suction. This can cause the valves to flutter and possibly flood with liquid refrigerant. Because liquid cannot be compressed, flooded starts result in significant wear and tear on the compressor.

Poor oil management is also a dangerous effect from low ambient cooling. Oil is used to lubricate moving parts within the compressor. If it gets stuck in low-pressure, low-velocity spots in the circuit, it is lost or diluted from the crankcase. This dramatically affects the lifespan of the compressor.

In larger systems, separators strip most of the oil from the discharge gas and return it back to the compressor. Crankcase heaters maintain viscosity, ensuring refrigerant does not migrate into the crankcase and dilute the oil during the off-cycle.

Solutions for Head Pressure Loss

The only way to resolve the issue of low ambient cooling—being able to turn the compressor on when it’s cold outside—is to keep the refrigerant pressure on the high side of the system above a certain pressure. All solutions involve methods to slow down the rate of how much heat the condenser rejects as outdoor temperatures drop.

These methods either or both control the speed or off-cycle of the condenser fans or control how much refrigerant can build up in the condenser.

Fan Control

→ Fan cycling switches

A typical fan cycling switch monitors the high-side pressure of the refrigerant. If the head pressure drops below a certain PSI, it shuts the condenser fan off. Without airflow across the condenser coil, less heat is rejected, and the head pressure builds up. When the switch senses the pressure is high enough, it will turn the fan back on. Shutting off condenser fans is a very common and simple way to keep discharge pressure high. In emergency situations, for example, pulling fuses to disable a condenser fan is a quick, temporary fix to maintain head pressure.

→ Variable fan speed

Rather than turning the condenser fan completely off, using a speed controller like a variable frequency drive (VFD) or a MotorMaster can make the fan slow down when head pressure drops. Reducing airflow across the condenser slows the rate of heat transfer and allows pressure to build up.

Refrigerant Control

→ Split condensers

Split condensers are most commonly found in rack refrigeration systems. The setup uses either three-way or solenoid valves and check valves to physically divide the condenser coils into two or more separate sections, in essence, "splitting" the size of the condenser. One half is dedicated to be used all the time, whereas the other half is only used seasonally.

→ Heated receivers

If a system has one, the receiver is located on the liquid line after the condenser and before the expansion device. Receivers are common in systems with variable heat loads, allowing the system to hold extra refrigerant charge and unload as needed. Keeping the receiver warm with a bellyband heater and insulation allows the refrigerant to stay pressurized and ensure refrigerant can flow all year long when it is needed.

→ Condenser flooding

Flooding the condenser is a process of stacking liquid refrigerant in the condenser coil, reducing the total condensable surface area of the outdoor coil, causing an increase in head pressure.

A common method of flooding the condenser involves a two-valve system, using what are known as ORI (open on rise of inlet pressure) and ORD (open on rise of differential) valves. The ORI valve is sometimes referred to as a "headmaster" or condenser holdback valve which more clearly describes its purpose. Located on the outlet of the condenser, this valve modulates to back up refrigerant in the coil and maintain a certain pressure in the condenser.

The ORD valve is located on the condenser bypass line and is used to pressurize the receiver with hot gas to stabilize the pressure inside the receiver. In essence, this valve steps down the higher discharge pressure created by the holdback valve.

→ Low Ambient Control (LAC) valves

LAC valves, branded by Sporlan/Parker, are a one-valve option for condenser flooding. It accomplishes condenser flooding by stacking refrigerant in the condenser while simultaneously bypassing discharge gas to the receiver.

About the Author:

Lianna Schwalenberg is a service technician for the K Company, a mechanical contractor with over 50 years experience pursuing excellence in design, installation, energy management, and service, for commercial, industrial, and residential HVAC/R settings, located in Akron, OH.

Lianna has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a minor in Environmental Studies, and an Associate of Applied Science in HVAC Technology from Stark State College.

She argues that people like herself who own fish or aquatic turtles intrinsically understand the dynamic relationship between water and air.



EH-TEAM: Building the Future of the Skilled Trades Through Mentorship

The EH-TEAM is driven by a shared belief that mentorship and real-world exposure are essential for shaping the future of skilled trades. By actively engaging with technical schools, industry events, and in classrooms across Canada, EH-TEAM members help students see these trades as a meaningful, respected, and rewarding career path. Through hands-on workshops, school visits, and honest conversations, the team brings real job-site experience into learning environments—encouraging curiosity, confidence, and informed career choices.

That commitment was on full display at Red Deer Polytechnic, where the EH-TEAM supported Impetus Media with the donation of a boiler build for actual hands-on learning. In a time when skilled labor is in short supply, initiatives like this reflect EH-TEAM's ongoing dedication to investing in education and supporting the next generation of trades professionals.

The EH-TEAM van and members were on site, offering students an opportunity to engage directly with industry professionals and learn more about skilled trades careers. NTI led a structured walkthrough of the boiler system, explaining its operation and role in building systems. Several classes attended with time for students to ask questions, reinforcing classroom learning with real-world application.

"I'm truly grateful for the boiler build donation at Red Deer Polytechnic. It provides our students with a purpose-built learning tool that allows them to slow down, ask better questions, and understand systems the right way. This initiative closely aligns with the EH-TEAM philosophy of learning through mentorship, hands-on experience, and doing the work with intention—never shortcuts. Thank you to our industry partners for investing in education that builds confidence, craftsmanship, and the next generation of skilled trades professionals."

Rob Kwiczak

Trades Instructor
Red Deer Polytechnic
EH-TEAM Member

In photo: Travis Loewen (NTI Boiler), Terence Chan (Impetus Media), Jason Helman (EH-TEAM), Wolfgang Schifer (Associate Dean), and Rob Kwiczak (Trades Instructor, Red Deer Polytechnic | EH-TEAM Member).



THE EH-TEAM ELEVATE YOUR TRADE

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POWERED BY 



“As a member of the **EH-TEAM**, I strive to embody the slogan “**ELEVATE YOUR TRADE**”. This is accomplished in many ways; for example, from continually updating myself on changes and advancements in HVAC technology, to educating individuals about the HVAC industry through various social media videos and live hands-on demos at trade shows. As an **EH-TEAM** member I constantly strive to inspire the next generation of skilled trades workers as well.

One of the great aspects of being part of the **EH-TEAM** is connecting with a group of skilled trades workers who collectively embody the mindset of community over competition. Each member of the **EH-TEAM** is there to help each other out. Being an **EH-TEAM** member from inception, it is incredible to see the number of new and honorary members growing over the years. We are always seeking to welcome individuals to our team who embody the mindset of elevating their trade.”

- Matt Waxer @the_hvac_doctor

In 2018, an idea was brought to life.

An idea that HVAC guys who were passionate about their craft could wear cool gear that represented what they did for a living.

An idea that the brand itself would stand for something more than just a cool looking shirt or hat.

That idea was



It celebrates those who have the desire to learn and have made the conscious decision to strive to be the best at what they do.

Being tactical is a mindset.

It's seeing the end before you even begin.

Calculating, planning, and plotting every step to ensure the success of the team, job or goal.

So keep training, keep learning, and make the decision to be the best.



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more than a lifestyle
› it's a mindset**

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