



THE RIDLEYS' JOURNEY

GREG CRUMPTON:
CROSS THE CRAFT DIVIDE

preview: *The Installer Show*

Ask a Jerk **#5**

tech talk: sokaris: heat pumps

installer
SHOW

18-19 March 26
Javits Center, NYC



Congratulations!!

Welcome to the fall 2025 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

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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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Greg Crumpton



author of deepKnowledge

fall 2025

the HVAC Tactical magazine is brought to you by

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.







Ask A Jerk #5

And...on go the thermostats. The leaves put on a colorful show, the swimming pools get covered, and the no-heat calls begin.

This is our time! Cleanings, service calls, and new heating equipment are all on the menu, so make sure your truck is stocked, and you're in the "heating" frame of mind. And remember that there is nothing wrong or underhanded with simply giving your customers options for better equipment or accessories that may improve their day-to-day lives; let them make the decision!

Dear Jerks,

We've been putting in a lot of heat pump water heaters, and that's been going OK, but now we're starting to get some complaints from our customers about their basements getting too cold. Should we offer to install space heaters in those rooms?

-Basement Pokies

Dear Mr. Pokies,
You could install a space heater in the room that houses the hp water heater, and that would actually improve the performance

of the water heater itself, but let's think about this for a minute. Heat pumps don't create heat at all, they're just pretty good at transferring it from one place to another: in this case, from the basement air to the water in the tank.

In fact, I've heard of one situation where four hp water heaters were installed in a very small room and worked so well that they actually caused the pipes to freeze! So, yes, they're great at removing heat from a room.

But, instead of going through the expense of installing additional heat in the room, you could run a duct to the outside of the building so that the heat the water heater uses to transfer comes from somewhere other than that room. Some manufacturers have a collar for that very purpose already installed on their units. Problem solved.

Dear Loud-mouthed Jerks,

I have a small HVAC company that I started a few years back, and now we're up to four trucks. Things are going well, but we're growing out of the shop that I rent and need

more space. People tell me I should buy a building, but it seems like a lot of expense that I don't need. What do you think?

-Growing like weed.

Dear weed master,

Of course we don't know your particular financial situation, and we can only guess about your leafy stash, but here is our advice.

First, with anything financial, always check with your accountant, rather than just your friends in the back of a smoke-filled service van. But beyond that, buying a building as you progress in your business life is usually a smart move.

First of all, you're not paying cash for it, so don't worry about using your entire savings account. Next, there are potentially a lot of tax benefits to real estate that you're probably not aware of, and purchasing and collecting real property has proven time and time again to be one of the surest ways to create long term wealth. And... if you can wrap your head around buying a building bigger than you currently need, you may be able to rent out the excess to cover part of, or even all of your mortgage! Go check it out and get on the road to real wealth.

Dear Microphone Jerks,

My girl and I really love your show, but we have a problem when it gets cold. She works in a school and has lots of time off. She even gets to stay home when they just mention snow in the forecast. But being in the heating business, well, you know, we work all the time when it gets cold out, and she doesn't want to hear it. She wants me to get a different job, but I like what I do. Can you talk to her for me?

-Not whipped, really

Dear PW,

We'll talk to your girl if you want, but there may be a different outcome than you

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wanted! But seriously, I think what may help is to explain to her that you don't just go around to people's houses and fix things, you're helping people in their time of need! Like young mothers with new babies, and old people that are susceptible to cold temperatures—you are helping to keep them safe and healthy.

And for the rest of the world, you work hard to protect property, keep things running as they should, and keep husbands and wives from fighting about how cold it is! You're like Superman in a service van! You're a hero! She should make you a cape.

Give us her phone number, we'll straighten her out.

the case for **multi-skilled** tradespeople

→ why you should consider crossing the craft divide

CROSSING THE CRAFT DIVIDE

Plumbing is a skill—and at its best, an art. Out of piping, water, pressure, and the earth's gravitational pull, plumbers have long been crafting ingenious systems for sanitation and comfort. One of the oldest skilled trades, plumbing systems for water and waste date back as far as 3,000 BCE in ancient Rome. Now that's old school!

As civilization has advanced, so have the skills, training, and the requirements of the modern-day plumber. **But should plumbers stop once they become experts in their craft?**

I am not talking about stopping their learning or growth. I'm referring to stopping at the doorway of plumbing. Should they cross into other trades?

Some of the most highly skilled tradespeople are truly "multi-craft savvy"—unicorns in the field. An HVAC technician who is advanced in her electrical knowledge, the electrician who understands network cabling for IT communications, or the iron worker who is particularly gifted at installing duct work—these are true unicorns within our industries and can be game-changing MVPs in your company.

WHY IT PAYS TO BE DUAL-DISCIPLINED

If you are a tradesperson with the desire to become cross-trained, here's what you gain: more opportunity, more income, and more control over your future.

Just think about the value you deliver: to your customer, your company, and the trades at large. The more you know, the more valuable you become, whether that's deeper within your core skills or expanding your skillset. Being multi-skilled gives you a serious edge.

You'll earn more as a sharper asset—for your company or yourself if you're self-employed. You can charge more, take a wider variety of jobs, and stay in demand.

Customers will start to notice. Deeper rapport and

stronger relationships will begin to form. When they see you investing in your own growth—and solving more of their problems in one visit—they trust you more. They refer you more. They remember you.

Maybe the most important part of being hybrid-skilled is the legacy you establish—raising the bar for excellence and helping those coming up behind you to see a wider path for their careers. You set the standard. Whether you know it or not, younger workers always look to the seasoned pros—the master craftspeople—to see how they should act. Show them that learning doesn't stop at one skillset, and you build the bench strength of the company and the industry simultaneously.

THE SMART BUSINESS MOVE

Listen up owners, managers, and tradespeople running your own shops: multi-craft team members are a gift—to you, your customers, and your bottom line. They deliver more value to the end user, which benefits everyone involved.

Sure, they may hold a primary role—say, as a journeyman plumber—but when they can step into other roles as needed, they reduce downtime, cut costs and boost jobsite momentum. Whether you're leading a crew or working for yourself, the ability to pivot between trades improves your margins and builds long-term trust with clients. That kind of flexibility quickly becomes invaluable.

Every business has felt the strain of "Too Much Work or Too Many People" Syndrome. It's tough to perfectly balance labor across all your trades. Having an extra utility player can help in some of those cases. Yes, the union versus merit shop is a factor, but true professionals know how to serve their role with integrity. In addition to their overall role in the service delivery model, these especially talented folks understand that customer satisfaction leads in the end.

WHY MORE PEOPLE DON'T DO IT (AND WHY THEY SHOULD)

What holds people back from going multi-craft?

What are the barriers to making these cross-functional opportunities a reality?

Often, it simply comes down to giving rising stars a chance to try—to see if they have the drive and desire to go beyond one lane, and possibly become one of a small percentage of multi-craft stars out in the wild. And at times, it's an employer who is afraid of increased compensation on the statement.

Multi-skilled tradespeople will cost you more per hour...and they should! However, you'll recoup that investment by charging appropriately for their value. A few dollars per hour for excellence should not be the reason you pass on a highly-skilled professional—or underpay them. Someone else who understands the inherent benefits of will gladly take them and compensate them accordingly.

THE WEEKEND THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Consider a large weekend project: A retrofit on Friday evening at five. You get the keys to the building, and the agreement is that you will have that building, cool, warm, re-plumbed, new electrical distribution panels—whatever you have sold done—by opening on Monday morning, with the building ready for inhabitants and all signs of the chaotic weekend gone.

Now imagine if you had a team of multi-craft trades people. Yes, they all have their craft and they are excellent at it. But if at 3am Sunday

morning craftsman A needs to jump in to help craftsman B wrap their unique piece of the project, how much better the result would be?

When you later see that you maintained or exceeded the gross margin percentage and dollars you priced it at, the extra cost of having those multi-craft warriors on the team seems to fade away in the early daylight of Monday morning.

The weekend scenario above is one that I have personally lived for many years. Being a young apprentice, I was fortunate to work for a company that did a lot of replacement and retrofit work. Many weekends were spent just as I have laid out above. The experiences gained from being one of the crew on these shutdowns has proven to be invaluable to me over the years.

For example, as an apprentice I learned many techniques for rigging. Progressing deeper into my training, I learned more about the operating controls of these systems (as we were doing the work ourselves rather than subcontracting it out). Start-up and commissioning for these types of projects was a deep learning opportunity in troubleshooting as well as simply overcoming any hurdle—especially since Monday morning was still coming at me, and moving at warp speed.



With all this real-world experience of what it takes to pull off multi-trade projects, I later benefitted within project management and selling, too.

LEVELING UP BEATS QUITTING

Feeling stuck doesn't always mean it's time to leave—it might just be time to level up.

Before you assume there's no room left to grow, consider what happens when you stretch across trades, not just within one. There's more opportunity in the trades than most people realize—you just have to look sideways, not out.

So, if you're craving more, don't leave the trades. Dig deeper.

Explore the skills adjacent to your own and make yourself irreplaceable. It works.

Greg Crumpton
Vice President
Service Logic



If the idea of mastering multiple trades resonates, Greg expands on how to build a strong internal foundation to support that flexibility in deepKnowledge, available on Amazon.

Greg's book collects many of the lessons he's learned over decades – from digging deep within to action steps you can apply now.

be **seen**



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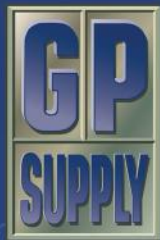
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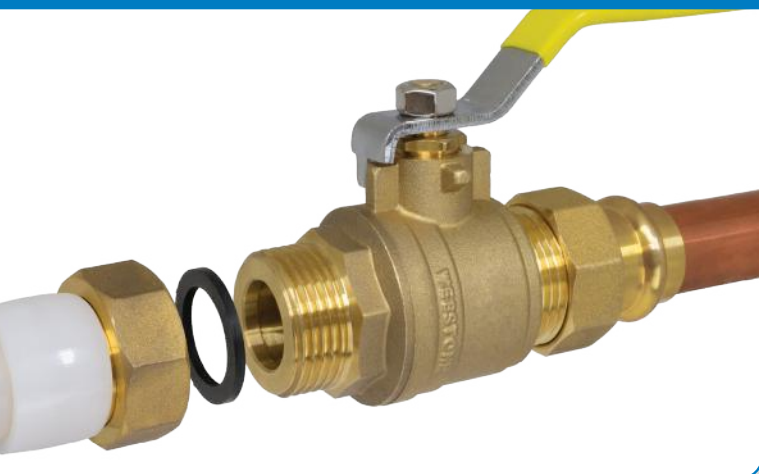
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The Malco Group Selects 2025 Counterperson of the Year

Award honors outstanding wholesale distribution customer service

ANNANDALE, MN— The Malco Group, a leading manufacturer and distributor of high-quality solutions for the HVACR and building construction trades based in the Americas, today announced that Guy Galbraith of Johnstone Supply in Mount Laurel, N.J., has received the company's 2025 Counterperson of the Year award. The award recognizes exceptional counter service at U.S. wholesale distribution locations.

Galbraith was selected for exemplifying Malco's core values including dedication to excellent customer service, and going above and beyond to

ensure contractors have The Malco Group tools and products needed to get the job done. He received a \$500 gift card, along with a Malco hat.

"Guy always goes the extra mile to find a part or confirm the proper matching of specific components," said John Demree, Galbraith's nominator. "He has been monumental in educating several generations of HVACR technicians."

"We are excited to recognize Guy for delivering excellent customer service to ensure builders, HVACR

technicians and other trade professionals have the tools and solutions from The Malco Group that they need to succeed at their jobs," said Rebecca Talbot, vice president of marketing for The Malco Group. "Guy's tenure at Johnstone Supply is a testament to his dedication to the industry and his customers."



Guy Galbraith // Johnstone Supply

About The Malco Group

The Malco Group is a leading manufacturer and distributor of high-quality HVACR and building construction products based in the Americas.

With a focus on innovation, precision engineering, and field-tested performance, The Malco Group powers the success of trade pros and businesses across the continent. Its portfolio includes ACE Chemical, Aspen Pumps, Beckett, Big Foot Systems, C&D Valve, HydroBalance, Malco Tools, Unilite and Veto Pro Pac.

HOMEPROS QUICK UPDATES

The residential HVAC market had a tough third quarter. Manufacturers Carrier and Lennox reported 40 and 23 percent year-over-year drops in residential unit volume during the quarter, while Trane experienced a roughly 30 percent decline in residential bookings. The results come as inventory levels remain elevated across the industry, and follow A2L-related cylinder shortages earlier this year, along with a short summer, executives noted.

The EPA has proposed nixing a key deadline. The agency in early October called for eliminating the January 1, 2026, deadline for installing certain residential and light commercial AC and heat pump systems, as it "no longer believes" that it's warranted. The EPA is accepting public input before making a final decision, which is unlikely to be published before the end of 2025.

Nexstar Network has parted ways with private equity. The 33-year-old HVAC, plumbing, and electrical-focused coaching and training group has begun cutting ties with its private equity-backed contractor members – and is no longer accepting new members backed by a private equity group. The move comes amid a refocusing on its core mission, which is "serving the underdog," per CEO Julian Scadden.

Google will let consumers hide search ads. Until now, the company has individually labeled sponsored search results. But a redesign, which affects every business category, including home services, groups search ads into one section and includes a 'Hide sponsored results' label, potentially reducing contractors' ad visibility and click-through rates.

JPMorgan is leaning into HVAC. The banking giant is aiming to quintuple the revenue and headcount of its investment banking arm's business services group, which includes the commercial HVAC, plumbing, and electrical industries, to capitalize on strong investor demand.

find out more: homepros.news

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Everything HVAC Contractors Need To Know About the R-454 Shortage

What's causing the shortage, and when will it end?

HANNAH BELLOLI

Air Conditioning | Heating | Refrigeration

the NEWS

As the HVACR industry navigates a major refrigerant transition, confusion and frustration have followed – particularly around the availability of R-454B. Though both R-454B and R-32 were introduced as low-GWP alternatives to R-410A, only one has seen widespread supply challenges.

Why the discrepancy? Industry insiders point to a combination of manufacturing decisions, timing, supply chain strain, and rising demand. From factory floors to service vans, stakeholders across the industry are working to manage the disruption – while contractors are left trying to meet customer needs in the middle of a shifting landscape.

WHAT'S THE SHORTAGE?

For anyone who might still be confused on what there's a shortage of, let's clear it up: There's a shortage of R-454B. Not R-32. Both are A2L refrigerants, and both were released at the same time. So why is there a shortage of one and not the other?

Over the last few years, Clifton Beck, digital media manager at ESCO Institute, has visited several of ESCO's major manufacturers for a behind-the-scenes look of the refrigerant transition.

"You gotta remember, our manufacturers had a very difficult choice because of the AIM Act and the technology transition rule," Beck said. "They had to look at the refrigerants and decide what was best for manufacturing rollout."

On one hand, R-32 was an already existing refrigerant – but transitioning existing products from R-410A to R-32 would have required an extensive amount of re-engineering.

"Manufacturers that went with R-32 had to do some pretty significant re-modifications to their production lines," Beck said. "They began as early as July of 2024, and they started releasing new products on lines, one at a time, so that by the end of 2024, all of the lines had been converted over and ready for the deployment. But it was done over a significant amount of time, which did create a shortage of some of those earlier 410 products, but there was a transition window."

On the other hand, there was R-454B, which very closely matched the performance of R-410A, making it a more straightforward option for manufacturers to implement. Many manufacturers that chose R-454B, Beck said, were able to continue producing R-410A until the very end of 2024, with minimal impact to the supply of equipment.

"But what it did do was it introduced a lot of R-454B equipment into the market all at once, and put a bit of a demand on the supply gas side of it – not on the manufactured gas side," Beck said. "So, the deployment of the two different generations of refrigerant did look very different from the inside. Each one had their own challenges, and that was the reason we've seen slightly different deployments of both versions of equipment."

Joseph Giannetti, general manager of cooling, construction, and specialty at Worthington Enterprises, offered up this analogy: If a customer goes to a McDonald's and orders 1,000 cheeseburgers, they aren't going to get them in five minutes.

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"That doesn't mean there's a cheeseburger shortage nationally, it means my expectations didn't match the system's cycle time, and that's what played out," Giannetti said. "So yes, the market experienced pressure, but not due to neglect, that's for sure. We're trying very hard. There's a combination unexpected volume, some timing misalignment."

Cylinder availability was an early concern, but supply now appears to be catching up with demand.

Giannetti noted that the issue has likely shifted downstream. He explained that in order to answer key questions – such as how many refrigerant cylinders are actually needed—it's essential to understand how many air conditioning units are being installed and how many cylinders are required per installation. "But then it's the load-in, I think, that is the difficult part," Giannetti said. "How many service vans are there? How many counters, how many distribution locations, and how many cylinders do I need? That's the only open question that we have. But I do believe, and I think others in the industry believe, that the pressure has moved downstream."

WHEN WILL IT GET BETTER?

Over the last several months, manufacturers have been working together to ensure that they are actually making progress in this transition.

"We recognize that technicians/contractors are not feeling comfortable right now because they're going out with new installation of 454B equipment, and they're not able to find – in certain parts of the country – the gas," said Graham Pratt, American senior business director at Chemours. "That said ... the supply chain for Chemours and the refrigerant industry has been actively responding, and I feel that the situation is stabilizing."

In fact, Chemours, an R-454B manufacturer, has significantly ramped up its production and distribution to support the aftermarket.

"We've expanded line fill capacity, we've added third party operations, we've increased shift coverage to accelerate cylinder availability," Pratt said. "So relief, in our opinion, has already begun by the truckloads, and we're already seeing steady improvement and expecting throughout the summer. Additionally, we are working with our OEM partners to send bulk product throughout the channel to broaden the distribution."

So when will subject matter experts be able to comfortably predict that the refrigerant will catch up with the demand? Will it be weeks? Months? It's hard to say.

Pratt acknowledged that forecasting demand is challenging because orders keep coming in. He explained that contractors, understandably, feel they can't proceed with installations unless they have access to R-454B. From the manufacturer's perspective, the focus is on working through the current backlog by increasing the rate at which they break down bulk refrigerant into individual cylinders, redirecting product volume to other repackers in the industry, and working closely with distributors to fulfill open orders.

Despite these efforts, demand continues to grow, partly because customers, uncertain about availability, are placing larger orders than they need – ordering 10 cylinders in hopes of receiving at least two. Customers over-ordering adds "noise" that makes true demand harder to measure, Pratt said.



"But I feel comfortable that this is a very short-term issue," Pratt said. "And I ask the industry to be patient as Chemours and other gas manufacturers really work through this issue."

WHAT'S A CONTRACTOR TO DO?

The HVACR industry and its stakeholders have not been quiet about the effects they are feeling, or the ideas they have to manage the shortage. One common suggestion is to recover R-454B charge from a system and replace it with R-410A. But that creates its own set of challenges.

"One of the things that we learned is that R-454B does actually have some glide to it, and getting the proper mixture in the proper way inside of that tank is going to be difficult, if not impossible, and there's no testing done after the fact to ensure that this really is the refrigerant that's needed for this particular system," said Jason Obrzut, director of government and industry relations, ESCO Institute.

There's a certain liability with that as well, as contractors then become the 'manufacturer' of the refrigerant.

"There's no brand name on that, so it's not recommended," Obrzut said. "I'm not here to tell anybody what to do or what not to do, but I think we should leave the creating of refrigerants to the engineers and the professionals, rather than trying to experiment and become chemists ourselves."

ACCA's latest poll showed that 48% of its members were feeling the effects of the refrigerant transition – and according to Barton James, president and CEO of ACCA, the work its members are doing accounts for more than half of the HVAC work in the country.

So, what are contractors supposed to do? How can they prepare for the busy summer season with limited access to refrigerant? For starters, they can ensure they remain focused on the most important aspect of their jobs: their customers.

"Do right by your customer," James said. "This is where your repairing skills are more important than ever to get someone through [this challenging time]."

It's important to note that every contractor, though all feeling effects, might not be experiencing them in the same way. What's uncomfortable for some can be completely unforgiving to others.

Eddie McFarlane, chief learning and development officer at Sila Services, suggests contractors check out ACCA's online R-454B resource hub, which gets updated whenever new information is released.

The challenge, though, is deciding what to do to take care of customers today, versus adding to the problem by way of stocking up on refrigerant.

First and foremost, he said, it's essential for contractors to maintain close and frequent communication with their distributors, as strong relationships are especially important during times like these. He noted that some contractors still have R-410A inventory and are completing projects with what's left in their warehouses. Others are switching brands, but McFarlane cautioned against that, pointing out that demand forecasts were based on certain refrigerants like R-32 – and a mass shift could create similar shortages.

"Contractors solve problems every day – we show up and we have a plan, and then something happens, and we have to adapt and overcome," McFarlane said.

That being said, McFarlane warned against taking shortcuts, like using mixed refrigerants or unofficial conversion kits, which could lead to liability issues if they deviate from manufacturer guidelines. While such decisions might seem like quick fixes, he said, they carry long-term consequences. Contractors also have commitments to their teams and customers, which adds to the pressure they're feeling.

McFarlane mentioned that access to 90-pound cylinders through nighttime down-packing is one possible option, though it requires ideal conditions.

"But many technical people in the contracting world are asking if we go liquid to liquid," McFarlane said. "Understand, partners are hesitant to put documentation out that may leave them liable for certain things. That's part of the other challenge. If we can get some best demonstrated practices – at least, that's what we're encouraging. We're asking every day for that."



"with god
all things are possible"
matthew 19:26

20
VISIT
25

Ighor Martins

36 ♦ raleigh NC

years in the trade

17

favorite brands

lennox

hobbies

soccer ♦ football



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Heart, Tools



, and Purpose: **THE RIDLEYS' JOURNEY**





A man with a beard is holding a red and black power drill. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with a logo that says "MIRACLE MECHANICAL" in red and white. The background is a solid light blue color.

Thirty minutes north of Atlanta, in the rolling suburbs of Forsyth County, Georgia, Brent and Kathleen Ridley have built a life focused on family, craftsmanship, and compassion.

Between running a thriving plumbing and HVAC company, growing a nationally recognized social media brand, and founding a nonprofit organization that restores comfort and hope to families in need, the Ridleys have turned the plumbing and HVAC trade into a calling that transcends business.

"We moved in together a month after we met," Kathleen recalled with a laugh. Seventeen years later - thirteen of them married - their teamwork has only deepened.

Their children, Noah (13) and Harper (12), came before their businesses really took off. Harper was born with Noonan Syndrome, a rare genetic condition that's required multiple invasive surgeries and relentless courage.

"She's the toughest person I know, and I know a lot of tough people," said Brent. Harper already talks about taking over the family business someday - a testament to the resilience and inspiration that define the Ridleys' household.

That family-first spirit has guided every decision they've made, including their move to northern Georgia. Harper's medical care required proximity to Atlanta, and Brent saw the opportunity to





open an HVAC division under his father's previously plumbing-only company, H&M Services.

"It just felt like the right time to be entrepreneurial," Brent explained. "We wanted to build something together. That was our goal from the very beginning."

Building the ToolPros Brand

Brent's journey into the trades began almost by accident. As a teenager working at a Harley-Davidson dealership, he wasn't sure what direction his life would take. A girlfriend's father owned an HVAC business and offered him a job.

"I hated it at first," Brent admitted. "All I did was insulate ductwork. It was hot, itchy, and miserable." But a conversation with a service technician changed everything.

"He told me about the variety of his work, how every day was different," continued Brent. "That clicked for me."

After a brief and unfulfilling college stint, Brent dove fully into HVAC. He earned his license, worked for several contractors, and eventually joined his father's plumbing company.

Ten years ago, he launched the HVAC division of H&M Services and never looked back. What began as one truck is now a fleet of seven, serving residential and light commercial clients throughout northern Georgia. Today, 60 percent of the company's work is plumbing, and 40 percent is HVAC. His father, now semi-retired, remains an active mentor and advisor.

Around the same time, Brent began experimenting with tool reviews on HVACtalk.com, long before influencer marketing or content creation were even part of our vernacular.

"I started writing reviews just to share what I'd learned," he says. "Then I realized manufacturers would send me tools to test. That's when things really took off."

In 2017, Brent and Kathleen launched the ToolPros Podcast, blending trade talk with real-world advice. Their online presence, particularly on Instagram, soon eclipsed the podcast. Kathleen created a sister platform, ToolWife, to represent the often-overlooked spouses of tradespeople and to show women that working in or supporting the trades



doesn't mean sacrificing femininity.

"Being a tradesman's wife or becoming a tradeswoman both come with challenges," said Kathleen. "I wanted to create a space where women could connect, laugh, and feel proud of what they and their families do."

As ToolPros evolved, so did their reach. Today, their content spans Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where hundreds of thousands follow their honest take on tools, small business, and life in the trades.

The couple now collaborates with major manufacturers on product testing and development. Brent hints at a forthcoming partnership that will "help modernize the trades" through innovative tools. The details are still under wraps but promise big things ahead.

"The trades changed our lives," Brent says. "Social media lets us show others what's possible when you combine skill, work ethic, and heart. We eventually back-burnered the podcasts, in part because we could reach a greater audience via Instagram, but also because we wanted more bandwidth to build a trade-related philanthropy we were both passionate about."

Miracle Mechanical

Of all the Ridleys' ventures, none reflect their values more than Miracle Mechanical, a nonprofit born from an idea that came to Brent in early 2021. Kathleen immediately agreed that the idea was worthy of their best effort.

"We had all these new tools from brand

collaborations piling up in the basement, even though I'd been giving tools to employees, friends and family for years," Brent recalls. "One night, I said, 'What if we used the relationship we've developed through the ToolPros to help people in need?'"

And so, Miracle Mechanical was formed. Their first few efforts were small; leaky faucets, minor repairs, etc., but the dream was bigger. Brent and Kathleen reached out to industry partners for support, starting with Becky Brotherton, who was, at the time, the marketing leader at RIGID Tools. She believed in the Ridleys' vision.

"She wrote the first sponsorship check," Brent says. "That's what made Miracle Mechanical real."

Since then, the Ridleys have completed fourteen major projects, each funded by sponsors such as RIGID, Lowe's, SharkBite, Viega, SupplyHouse.com, Navac, and Oatey. Projects have included full-home plumbing re-pipes, complete HVAC system replacements, and critical septic repairs, each professionally filmed and shared online to showcase the impact and give credit to the project sponsor.

"We're not just fixing equipment," Kathleen explains. "We're restoring dignity, hope, and comfort."

The stories behind these projects are often profound. One homeowner, unknowingly poisoned by a carbon monoxide leak from a broken furnace coil, hadn't left her house since her husband had passed.





"We warned her that having a crew and cameras around might be overwhelming," Kathleen recalled. "But afterward, she told us that she enjoyed every minute. Later, we saw her working at Home Depot. She said the project gave her the courage to start living again."

Another family, devastated by a car accident and financial hardship, received a complete HVAC overhaul, plus a new television – a gift Brent and Kathleen purchased themselves.

"Every penny from our sponsors goes directly into the work," Kathleen said. "Miracle Mechanical doesn't turn a profit. It's about giving back what the trades have given us, supporting members of our community when they need it most, and inspiring others to positively impact the people around them."

Finding families in need isn't as easy as it might seem. Some people are embarrassed to be down on their luck. On the other end of the spectrum, some people are more than happy to take a handout when they really don't need it. To find the right families, Miracle Mechanical partners with local nonprofits, posts on neighborhood Facebook groups, and relies on nominations from those who've seen their work.

"We make sure the help goes where it's truly needed," Kathleen explained. "At first, some people think it's too good to be true, but when they realize it's real, you can see the relief in their faces."

Looking ahead →

Today, the Ridleys continue to balance life as tradespeople, business owners, parents, influencers, and humanitarians. Their schedule is packed, but their priorities are clear.

"Everything we do – H&M Services, ToolPros, Miracle Mechanical – it's all connected," said Brent. "The trades gave us the skills and the platform to make a difference."

The dream for the future is to take Miracle Mechanical on the road, to create a national network of contractors and sponsors tackling projects across the country.

"We've met so many incredible tradespeople," Kathleen said. "Imagine what we could do if we all came together for this."

That vision might still be a few steps away, but if the past decade is any indication, the Ridleys will find a way. They always have.

"We started out just trying to make ends meet," says Brent.

"Now we're trying to make miracles happen."

IN THE T



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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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having
fun at work
we're doing it
wrong”



THE EH-TEAM ELEVATE YOUR TRADE



NOT JUST ANOTHER TRADESMAN: WHO IS TYLER DYNES?

Tyler is an integral member of the EH-TEAM, where he exemplifies what it means to “Elevate Your Trade.” Whether mentoring young pros, sharing insights at trade shows, or connecting across the industry, his presence is felt and appreciated. At the booth or in the field, he believes in lifting others up, passing down both skill and passion. Alongside him is his wife, Sarah, whose unwavering support and involvement have made her an extension of the EH-TEAM spirit. Together, they embody the values of mentorship, integrity, and community. As Tyler says, “With the EH-TEAM, it’s 100% or not at all.”

“Any day spent building custom mechanical rooms is a great day,” says Tyler Dynes and he means it. For Tyler, hydronic systems are far more than pipes and valves; they’re a form of expression - a blend of precision and passion. But Tyler’s path to this point didn’t begin in HVAC. Right out of high school, he started in automotive mechanics, only to realize it wasn’t where his heart was. A conversation with a local HVAC company and encouragement from friends already in the trade - ignited a new direction.

Mentorship shaped much of Tyler’s early career. Guided by experienced pros, he learned not just the trade, but the value behind it. Now, he’s the one inspiring others to learn and grow. “I just want to inspire others to learn and grow,” he says with quiet humility.

Social media has become a powerful tool in that mission. Through Instagram, Tyler has formed real connections across the trades - sharing his work, offering guidance, and receiving encouragement in return. “It’s more than just a platform,” he reflects. “It’s a community built on respect and shared passion.”

“Keep an eye on Tyler,” a colleague once said. “His craftsmanship is top-tier and he’s one of the most genuine people you’ll ever meet.” We couldn’t agree more.

Tyler Dynes @dyneshvac



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What's in store as the UK's leading trade event expands stateside:

Launching March 18-19, 2026, at New York City's Javits Center, the event will bring together over 5,000 visitors and 100 top brands to showcase innovation, hands-on experiences, and the hottest industry topics shaping the future of HVAC-R and plumbing.

The annual trade show will provide HVAC-R professionals with the opportunity to connect with manufacturers, learn from live sessions, and stay up to date with industry trends to keep their business ahead of the game.

Entry will be free for visitors, who can get their tickets today by heading to www.installershownyc.com.

Live Content

Live content will be at the heart of InstallerSHOW New York and will be available to all visitors at no extra cost. Three content theaters will be available for visitors, featuring the latest tech talks, tool demos, debates, and more.

InstallerPLAZA

The InstallerPLAZA - sponsored by Navien - will be the beating heart of InstallerSHOW New York. Like a live TV show across the two days, the InstallerPLAZA will shine a light on the hottest industry topics. Live podcasts, debates, product launches, influencers, expert speakers and more will take to the stage to tackle everything that HVAC-R professionals need to know.

Tool Demo Theater

HVAC-R mechanics, plumbers and all tradespeople love their tools.

InstallerSHOW New York will offer visitors the chance to get hands-on with new products, test them out and put them through their paces.

Product demos will be taking place throughout the two days in a dedicated show area, featuring the hottest brands like Veto Pro Pac, Fieldpiece, Rothenberger and more.

Technical Theater

Get your technical questions answered by the experts at InstallerSHOW New York's Technical Hub, sponsored by Fernox.

Visitors will be able to drop in and discuss system design, regulations, best practices, myth-busting, and more with product and technical managers.

If you have a question about system design, which products to select, how products work in different systems, the Technical Hub will provide the answers.

The Organizers:

InstallerSHOW New York will be brought to you by the team behind InstallerSHOW, the leading trade event in the UK for the heating, plumbing and renewables industry, which attracts over 31,000 visitors and 800 exhibitors. InstallerSHOW New York will be co-located with New York Build, New York's biggest Festival of Construction that features 45,000+ attendees, 550+ speakers, 550+ exhibitors, networking



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-Ben Poole





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trades journal // do i belong here?

paige knowles



The very first time I ever touched a tool that scared me was my freshman year of high school.

I was in trade school rotations, trying out different labs, when they handed me a torch in the HVAC shop. I was supposed to braze two pieces of copper together. Holding that live flame in my hand, feeling the heat and the weight of it – I was terrified. But then I saw the two pieces of copper melt into one. And I thought: Wow. I can do this.

I didn't come from a trades family.

Nobody in my family was a plumber, an electrician, or an HVAC tech. We were handy enough at home – painting, ripping up carpet – but there was no blueprint laid out for me.

In eighth grade I decided: I'm going to tech school for plumbing. At first, it was practical: plumbers make good money, and I figured I could save myself some bills as a future homeowner. But once I got into the lab, something stuck.

When I was 15, I was already working for a plumbing company. My parents had to drive me back and forth because I wasn't old enough to drive. I shadowed a grumpy service plumber who didn't have much patience for a kid. I cried some nights, but I kept showing up. I grew thicker skin. I learned how customers reacted when they saw a girl in their bathroom holding tools. Sometimes it was supportive. Sometimes it wasn't.

By 16, I moved over to rough-in construction. Gone were the neat uniforms – I showed up in dirty pants and a neon yellow safety shirt, hair tied back, hardhat on. I was part of a crew that accepted me. They didn't ask why I was there. They just said: show me what you've got. And I proved myself one day at a time – digging trenches, drilling through studs, running lines. Hard, dirty work.

When I competed in SkillsUSA my junior year, **I won first place in plumbing for my district.** My senior year, I had dreams of making it to nationals. But COVID canceled the competition. That crushed me. I had wrapped so much of my identity in proving myself, and now my shot was gone. I felt lost.

But then something surprising happened: I started posting my story online. People had time to listen. Other than essential workers, everyone was home. And people connected with what I was saying. At the same time, I was volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, working with Let's Build Construction Camp, and realizing it wasn't just plumbing I loved – it was the trades as a whole.

That led me into construction management. And later, HVAC. My sister and I both went back to school, side by side, earning our Universal 608 cards. I started part-time with Dual Temp, crawling rooftops, cleaning coils, changing filters, learning preventive maintenance. I'll never forget finding my first leak on a rooftop unit – and the pride my coworkers showed when I spotted it.

Here's the thing: I've never worked one single trade for five years straight. I'm not a 20-year master technician. I'm not pretending to be. I've done plumbing, HVAC, roofing, flooring, masonry, and more. And every time, I learn something new that makes me respect the people who have spent their lives perfecting those skills.

So why am I here?

Why am I in this magazine?

Because my mission is bigger than just me. I've published books teaching kids and families simple plumbing skills. I travel to schools and events talking about career paths in the trades. I've worked with organizations like 3M, Home Depot, and Lowe's to spread the message. And I keep showing up online – even when people say I don't belong, even when they call me a cosplayer, even when they tell others to unfollow me.

I know what I'm doing is impactful. Not because every HVAC veteran agrees with me, but because kids come up to me after a presentation and say, I didn't know this was even an option. I think I want to try it. That's the win. That's why I keep going.

Yes, I wear skirts to trade shows. Yes, I like my heart-shaped glasses. And yes, I get dirt under my nails, I sweat until I feel like I'll pass out, I burn myself, I carry tools up flights of stairs until my legs are jelly. Both things can be true.

The truth is, the trades need both kinds of people: the quiet pros who show up every day and do the work, and the loud ones – like me – who are willing to get on a stage, write a book, or make a video to pull more people in. We're facing a skills gap.

That means we need every hand we can get,

whether it's swinging a hammer or handing a mic to the next generation.

My goal is simple: to be the role model I needed when I was younger. To tell students: don't let anyone tell you "no." To tell the industry: keep the doors open. To remind everyone that while the work is hard, it's worth it.

Maybe I'm glamorizing the trades sometimes.

Maybe I'm guilty of making the job look fun.

But here's the reality: it is fun – even when it's tough. Because there's nothing like standing back at the end of a long day and seeing what you built with your own two hands.

I don't know exactly where my path will take me.

But I know this: I'm not going anywhere.

About the Author

Paige has associate degrees in construction management and HVAC.

She has hvac, plumbing, electrical, roofing, and other general construction and now works under seasoned pros in all trades.

She is a published author, speaker, and a trades advocate specifically for women and the younger generation and is working on a series showcasing newcomers to the trades.

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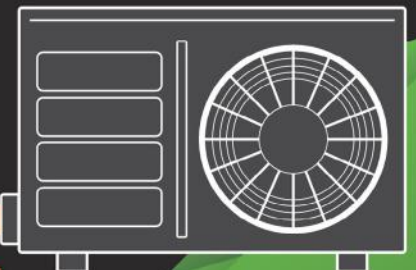
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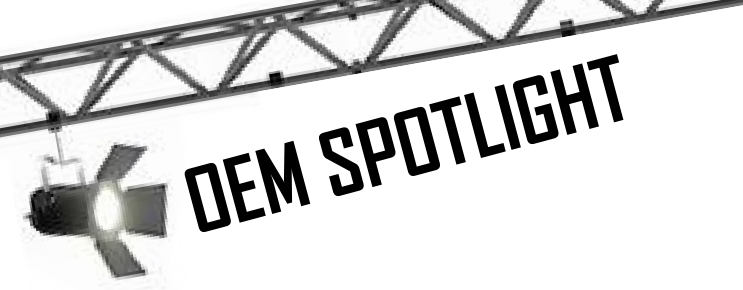
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devin cooley

president & co-founder

What is NVIRIQ?

NVIRIQ is a new kind of HVAC manufacturer, but more than that, it's a thermal technology company. As an OEM, the company designs and builds its own rooftop units, but what sets it apart is how it integrates patented thermal collectors and intelligent analytics software into the system. The goal is simple: make cooling smarter, more efficient, and easier to service. NVIRIQ wants to change the way people think about HVAC—from a commodity they dread to a technology they can trust and even get excited about.

Is "NVIRIQ" an acronym for something?

Yes, NVIRIQ actually has meaning built into the name. The "N" stands for integrated and innovative, "VIR" comes from the Latin word for green, and "IQ" represents Intelligent Cooling. To the company, it shows that what they're building is about more than hardware: it's integration, sustainability, and intelligence all working together.

Patented thermal collectors... are they like solar panels?

Kind of, but not exactly. They don't make electricity like solar panels. Instead, NVIRIQ's thermal collectors harness the sun's heat, hook directly into the rooftop unit's refrigeration cycle and take some of the load off the compressor. That means less strain on the system, longer equipment life, and an average of 42% savings on cooling costs. Think of it as giving the unit an extra boost from thermal energy.

What brought Devin Cooley to HVAC?

Cooley got his start back in 2011 where he first experienced early technologies trying to work their way into HVAC; solar electric, variable motor controllers and condenser misting systems. That



was when he saw the broader potential since no one was addressing the larger issue: lack of true thermal innovation.

What really pulled him in was seeing how much opportunity there was to modernize a very traditional industry. Those early experiences led to launching NVIRIQ, which takes that vision further: pairing renewable thermal power with purpose-built equipment and advanced software to flip the HVAC experience from negative to positive.

What about HVAC do you find most interesting?

For Cooley, it's the opportunity to turn something people usually view as a hassle into something they feel confident about. Most people only think about HVAC when it fails. This team wants to change that story: ease of install, lower operating costs, fewer service calls, and predictable performance. HVAC doesn't have to be the problem child; it can be the coolest thing since cooling.

How do NVIRIQ packaged heat pumps work?

At the core, they're heat pumps — but with some major upgrades. The RTU has inverter compressors for variable-speed performance, built-in ports for the thermal collectors, and an onboard analytics system. That software constantly adjusts performance in real time, which means fewer callbacks for techs and better ROI for owners.

What is the "thermal-verse"?

The thermal-verse is what NVIRIQ calls the world it's building—a conceptual place of innovation and growth where HVAC isn't just a box on the roof, but a smart, interconnected solution. The thermal collectors, RTU, and software all work together as one system. For techs, that means easier installs and a better service experience. For owners, it's peace of mind: reliable performance, lower costs, and compliance built in. The company sees endless possibilities for thermal dynamics and HVAC, and with their initial products they're just

scratching the surface. The thermal-verse turns HVAC from a commodity into a technology-driven experience...one you can actually feel good about.

How does NVIRIQ respond to industry change?

NVIRIQ is designed to stay ahead of the curve. Its systems use low-GWP refrigerants, renewable thermal energy, and smart controls to meet new regulations and ESG goals. This is especially important in states like California, where requirements are among the strictest. Their goal is to help owners and contractors future-proof their buildings so they're not scrambling with every new code update. Research and development is the core of the company's culture. By the time new standards take effect, NVIRIQ is already ahead of the game.

How does NVIRIQ support the HVAC community?

NVIRIQ knows new tech can make techs wary. That's why the company invests heavily in training, manuals, and its Installer Training Accelerator Program. The goal is simple: make installs straightforward, troubleshooting easier, and support always accessible. NVIRIQ also takes time to show up—at events, shows, and industry gatherings—sharing knowledge and listening to feedback. The team believes technicians are the lifeblood of the industry. Feedback from the field drives their continual refinement.

Advice for technicians on renewable energy with customers?

Cooley advises: keep it real. Don't sell "green" for the sake of green. Explain the practical side. Customers want to hear about lower bills, longer equipment life, and fewer service headaches. Renewable energy isn't just an environmental choice: it's a smart investment.

How can technicians get introduced to NVIRIQ?

The easiest place to start is nviriq.com or IG: @nviriq. The company has recently rebranded, launched a new logo and positioning, and rolled out its tagline: Built to Disrupt. There's also a new video that gives a first look at the "thermal-verse" – the world where thermal collectors power the next generation of HVAC. And for techs, there will be training opportunities and certifications to get hands-on with the system.

Advice for being a successful leader?

According to Cooley, great leadership isn't complicated – have a clear vision, empower your team, and don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves. He never asks his people to do something he hasn't done himself (or wouldn't at least try without embarrassing himself too badly). The best leaders know the trenches, the people, and the processes – because you can't steer the ship if you've never been on deck. Leadership is about showing up, taking action, and proving to your team that you've got their back, even when the waves get choppy.

What's next for NVIRIQ?

R&D is part of NVIRIQ's culture, and the company is always evolving. A key component of that momentum is listening to customers and technicians. NVIRIQ continually looks for ways to refine how customers experience HVAC—whether in deliverables, installation, or maintenance. The team also lives by the mantra "Design with the technician in mind," and they hold true to it.

As new products roll out, these innovators continue listening and adapt along the way.



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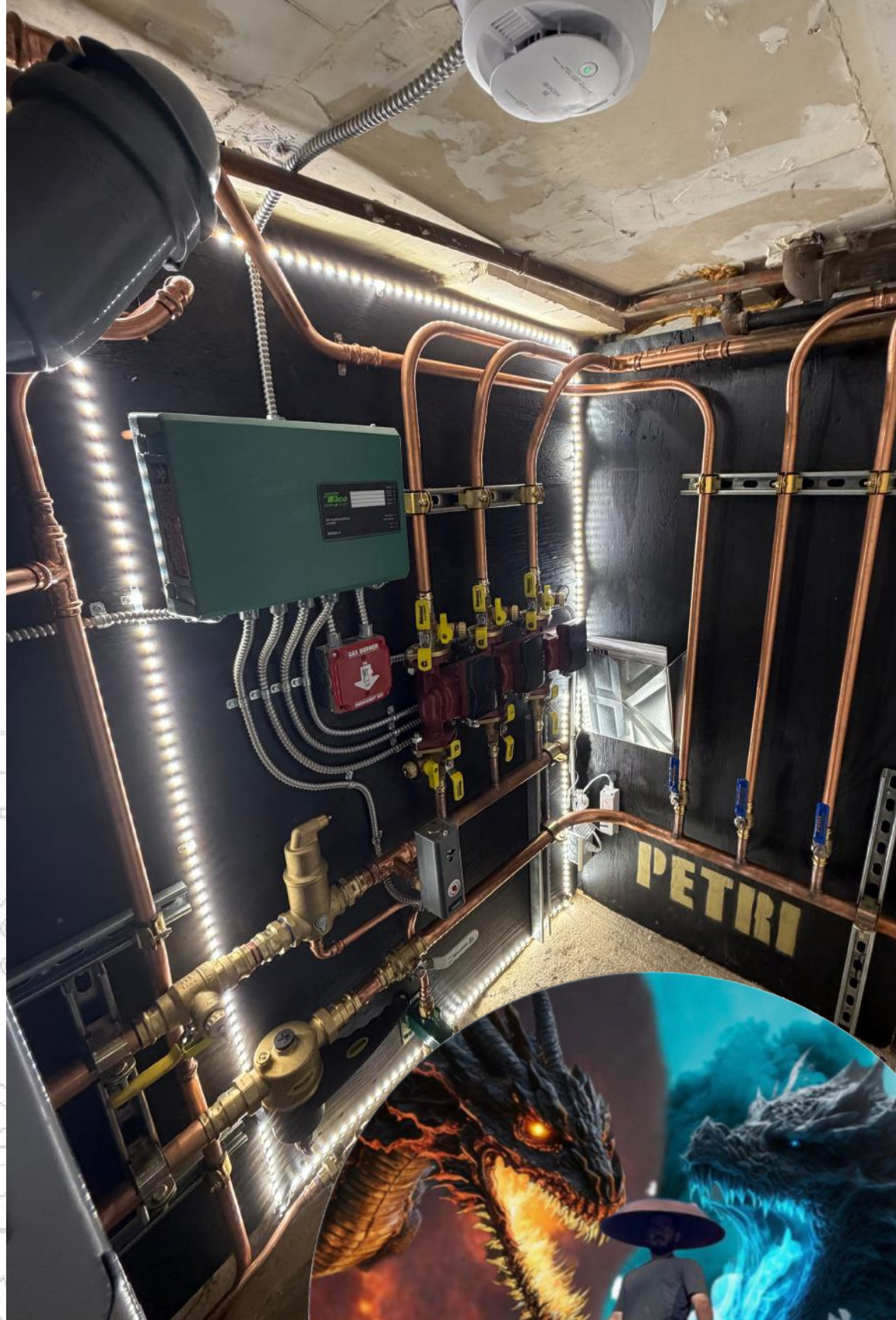




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So, I was in this house...

Jennifer Manzo

@hvachicksjennifer

Misfits of HVAC Podcast

INSIDE the HVAC/r PODCAST CIRCUIT

advisors and sales technicians, and continues to be a point of contention with many customers today.

How better to do this than a podcast?

Thanks to Everett's dedication to bringing back the honest worker—giving homeowners everything they need (and nothing they don't)—and wanting the world to know there's a better way, we now get to enjoy this GEM of a show:

So I Was In This House...Service & Sales Tales Podcast! This is one of my favorite shows on the circuit right now for its raw honesty, hilarious relatability and the connection it sparks between divisions of our industry that we would otherwise choose to keep very separate.

Week after week, guests from various walks of life in the service business industry join host Everett to tell their stories—real stories—of their time in customers' homes and businesses. A requirement to be a guest is, when you come on the show, you come exactly as you are, own your choices, and tell everyone the funniest, most emotional, embarrassing or memorable moments of your career. And they always start off: "So, I was in this house..."



Once upon a time, a brilliant HVACR master technician-turned-comfort advisor wanted to start a podcast. Not just any old podcast, but a chance for the listener to know exactly what it's like to be an HVAC or sales tech inside a home or business.

Everett Lippel started in the trade as a tech, working his way up the ranks and soaking up all the knowledge he could from his mentors and teachers. Eventually it became apparent that Everett was made for sales, and he wanted to bring a truly unique approach to what was quickly becoming a cutthroat business.

With the customer in mind, he began to create a process based in ethics and integrity, where customers are educated about their system and air quality, then offered solutions they truly need.

His in-field research, as well as talking to customer after customer, revealed the need to shine a spotlight on the art of ethical sales—and to combat the increase of the pushy, won't-take-no-for-an-answer, unnecessary-options style that sales "gurus" were exploding all over the country. It's a style that plagues the reputation of comfort

From crazy customers to heartfelt thanks, insane attic finds, and terrible bosses, So I Was in This House is sure to deliver the real-life experiences of techs in the field every day.

Manufacturer appearances lift the veil on the world of manufacturing, import/export, marketing and so much more as Everett's impeccable skill at human connection deeply impacts guests and listeners alike.

If education or Q&A style shows aren't your cup of tea, and you're seeking a relatable removal from everyday monotony, this is the podcast for you! To give an example, a few of the host's favorite episodes include:

The HVA-Chicks Jennifer episode (ain't that somethin'?), comprised of mostly eccentric and disgusting tales from the Maine lobster distributor;

and the Howard Partridge episode where a flooring trade owner talks about the time one of his techs cleaned all the floors of an entire ritzy home prior to the homeowner calling to inform them the tech had in fact been at the WRONG HOME all day!

When I say I can't get enough of this campfire-style content, just listen once and you'll know what I mean!

Do you have a fascinating story to tell? Interesting take on the trades in general?

Contact Everett on social media: (@soiwasinthishouse) to secure your guest spot.

As for the rest of us?

Let's all tune in on YouTube, Apple, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts!



heat pumps:

a water heater or a bizzarro refrigerator?

michael sokaris

What's all the buzz about heat pump water heaters?

Although a heat pump is very different from a refrigerator it is surprisingly similar - but in reverse.

Let me explain.

A heat pump water heater operates on the same basic principle as a refrigerator, but with the reverse objective. Both are types of heat pumps that use a refrigerant cycle to move heat from one place to another rather than generating it directly.

Come again:

To understand this a bit more let's look at desired results of each appliance and how it works.

Let's begin with the most basic of the equipment. Even my 12 year old son (Lukianos) knows the goal of the fridge, keep his black forest ham cold and ice cream sandwiches frozen. He is a simple child. But how is this done you may ask? The refrigerator pulls the heat out of interior of the fridge and expels it into the surrounding room.

On the other hand, the Ariston Heat Pump Water Heater (HPWH) does the mirror opposite of your trusty fridge. It takes heat out of the surrounding ambient air and sends it into the water tank of the water heater.

At the end of the day, it is about heat movement but with the only difference being the direction of the movement of the heat.

Both your fridge and a HPWH use the same refrigeration cycle, that utilize refrigerant fluid, an evaporator, a compressor, a condenser and an expansion valve. In a



future article we will discuss the various refrigerants (for HPWH's: R-134a, R-410A, R-744, R-513a and more) and how they compare.

Now let's look at the four remaining key components and what they do:

1. The evaporator: Lets call it the cold side The refrigerants, mentioned above, absorbs low-temperature heat from the environment (inside the fridge, or the air around the water heater). This turns the liquid refrigerant into a hot gas.

2. The Compressor: The gaseous refrigerant is then compressed, which dramatically increases its pressure and temperature.

3. The Condenser: The hot side The superheated, compressed refrigerant releases its high-temperature

heat into the desired area (the kitchen air for a fridge, or the water in the tank for a heat pump water heater). This causes the refrigerant to cool and condense back into a liquid.

4. Expansion Valve: The liquid refrigerant's pressure is then reduced, cooling it down rapidly before it returns to the evaporator to start the cycle over.

So why all the buzz about HPWH's? Again, the granular details are for a future article but simply put, a heat pump

water heater is moving existing heat in the ambient air therefore it is typically two to three times more energy-efficient than a conventional electric resistance water heater, which has to generate all of the heat itself.

All this to Ice cream sandwiches frozen and water hot.



MICHAEL SOKARIS

VP of Sales, Water Heating
Ariston

Michael and his team support the needs of HVAC, Plumbing, and Hydronic Engineers, Manufacturers Reps, Mechanical Contractors, Plumbing Contractors, Original Equipment Manufacturers and Wholesale Distributors across North America.



When working in the trades, it's easy to think: "I already get enough exercise on the job."

Why do I need to work out as well?"

It might feel that way, but here's the hard truth: working and working out are not the same. Heavy hauling, climbing ladders, scrambling in and out of tight crawlspaces—these all take a toll.

While the job can be physically demanding, it doesn't replace the benefits of structured fitness training. Working out could be the key to making your work easier, safer, and more sustainable. That's the difference training makes. Better endurance and fewer injuries help you stay strong and ready for whatever the job throws at you.

The reality is that a day on the jobsite taxes your body. You might be a 200-lb gorilla crafted from equal parts hard work and poor decisions. Even so, the heavy lifting and twisting through awkward corners still wear down joints and muscles. Without doing some sort of strength and conditioning outside of work, that constant strain will likely lead to injuries and long-term aches and pains. What's the difference, you ask? Working out, in most forms, is controlled and intentional.

It's been designed to strengthen weak points, improve balance, and build resilience so that your body is prepared for the unpredictable demands of the job. Strength and stamina go hand in hand—one picks up when the other taps out. Long days on the job can be a huge drain on your energy, even after ingesting caffeine like you're trying to bring down a rhino. Cardiovascular (cardio) training—whether hiking, running, cycling, or even interval training—helps build our overall physical stamina.

That alone could make the difference between pushing through a tough shift or burning out halfway through the day. The more conditioned you can make your lungs and heart, the more energy you'll have to finish the day strong and still have some left when you get home to your family.

Sure, your body takes a beating, but so does your mind. Working out isn't just physical—the trades are mentally demanding. And regular exercise offers a long list of proven cognitive benefits: reducing stress, sharpening focus, and improving your overall mood, among others.

That mental edge pays off on the job—whether you're troubleshooting a system, working on a tricky install or just trying to keep your cool when things go sideways. A focused mind is a clear mind.

The bottom line in all this:

Working breaks you down.

Working out builds you up!

The two are definitely not the same, but together they can make you a force to be reckoned with. A small investment in your personal fitness outside of work protects your body, extends your career, and keeps you performing at your best.

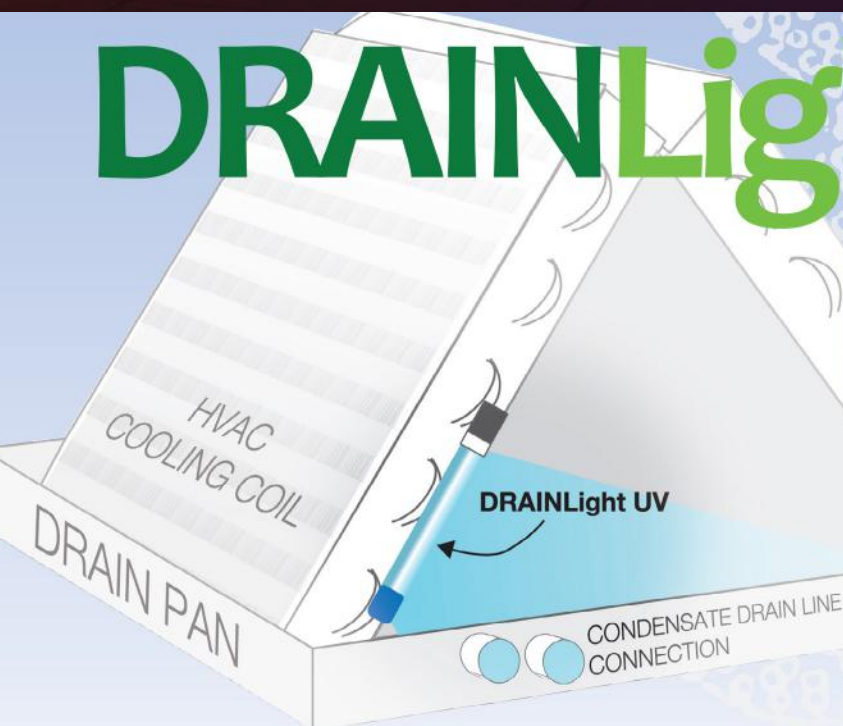
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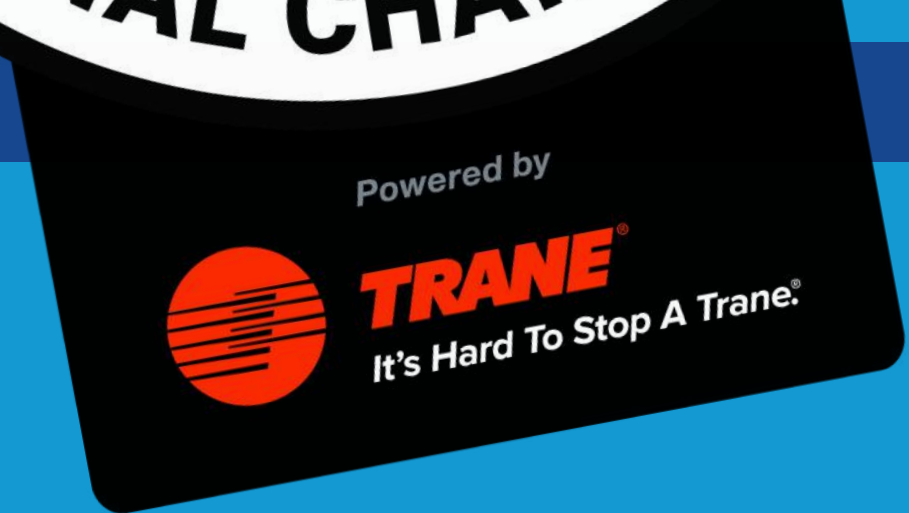
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Braden Reeser wins HVAC National Championship apprentice title

eddie wooten

Braden Reeser does this kind of work every day, and he showed off that knowledge, ability, and familiarity in winning the HVAC National Championship's apprentice division at the 2025 ServiceTitan Elite Trades Championship Series.

Reeser, an HVAC installer and technician for Springer Appliance in Ogallala, NE, earned \$20,000 for his deft duct work during Friday's final.

The five finalists built upon work completed on an air handler earlier in the day by the professional division finalists. Apprentices had 90 minutes to set up energy recovery ventilation (ERV) tied from return to supply for indoors and outdoors, plus install an air cleaner, a UV air purifier, and a filtration system.

"Every day, we do this," Reeser said. "I know how everything goes together. It makes it a lot easier than if somebody didn't know which way the pipe had to go. And I do measurements every day."

The units sat on horizontal platforms just more than 3 feet above the concrete floor of the Palm Beach County Convention Center, meaning the finalists faced a fitness test going up and down ladders in addition to the HVAC skill components. Danielle Combs, one of the judges and a program manager in customer and partner relations for ServiceTitan, called it a "human jungle gym."

And Reeser didn't disagree.

"It was a lot of up-and-down," Reeser said. "I did nothing really up top for cutting, so I had to go down, measure and cut. and then go back up." Part of Reeser's winnings will relieve the debt on his motorcycle.

"I'm going to get that paid off and then probably save the rest," he said.

Kirby Hess, of Flora, IN, finished second and pocketed \$10,000. Nathaniel Magner, of Boston, VA, took third place and won \$5,000.

Three-peat for Childress!

mike persinger

Craig Childress went from surviving to thriving to win his third consecutive ServiceTitan HVAC National Championship Friday, but the best moment, he said, came afterward.

After advancing to the final with his score in an HVAC diagnostic challenge he admits "is not what I do" on Thursday, Childress beat four other finalists in a challenge involving installing all the refrigerant piping and condensate piping for a Trane HVAC unit, to specifications in a tight, 90-minute time-frame at the Palm Beach County Convention Center.

Childress won \$40,000. Alex Ivey, of Mississippi, won \$15,000 for second, and New York's Scott Savidge took home \$10,000 for third place.

"I felt like this was a good competition because it wasn't overly complicated," ServiceTitan Industry Advisor and competition head judge Chris Hunter said. "It was like, let's get in here and do what's really done every day, and let's see who can shine."

That turned out to be Childress, who won both the HVAC and plumbing titles in each of the past two years but didn't qualify for the plumbing competition this year.

"I'm looking forward to coming back in plumbing next year," Childress said. "There were three new guys this year and two of them were on the podium. I want to get back and compete with some of those guys."

At the ServiceTitan HVAC National Championship, Childress noted a different comeback, which he said he'll use as inspiration.

"Look what Alex Ivey did," Childress said. "He didn't place last year and came back and won second this year. Great for him, and that's quite the achievement. You're certainly seeing more and more talent come through, which is great, and the sponsors are still stepping up and giving us exposure."

The day's biggest moment, Childress said, wasn't getting the check. It was when Childress and his wife, Rachel, told their kids "Dad did it AGAIN!"

I couldn't wait to get off that stage and come over and see my wife and experience this with her, and two minutes later we're on the phone with my kids," Childress said. "It is the best thing in the world."

And, once again, Childress proved best at the ServiceTitan HVAC National Championship.

"Three in a row means everything to me," Childress said. "It's something I never thought was possible."

THE PATH TO PALM BEACH

ROUND 1



Competitors participated in a five-minute online multiple-choice quiz, presented by Trane. The quiz, with questions provided by NATE, tested their industry expertise, job execution, safety practices, and code knowledge.

MARCH 1ST – JUNE 30TH

IN PERSON QUALIFIERS



Johnstone Supply hosted live in person qualifiers at various Johnstone Supply locations across the nation. Competitors who achieved the top score at their local Johnstone Supply automatically advanced to the Round 2 At Home Challenge.

WEEK OF MAY 19TH

AT HOME CHALLENGE KIT



The top 36 Professionals and top 36 Apprentices, plus the 6 Johnstone Supply in person qualifiers, who answered the most questions correctly advanced to Round 2.

They recieved a custom At-Home Challenge kit presented by Johnstone Supply which tested their skills and workmanship while completing a real-world job task to showcase their knowledge and skill expertise.

AUGUST 1ST – AUGUST 31ST

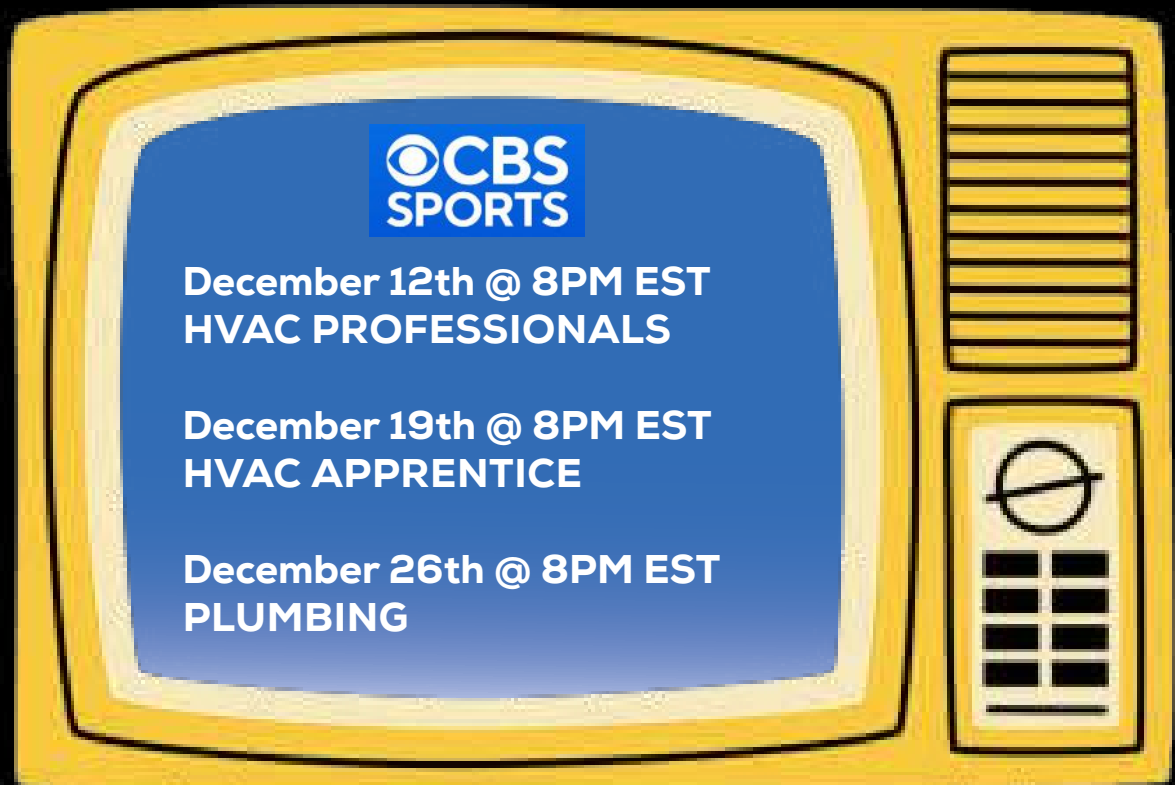
PACK YOUR BAGS



The top 10 professionals and 10 apprentices received an all-expenses-paid trip to compete in the Championship Finals for their share of over \$100,000 and the title of ServiceTitan HVAC National Champion.

OCTOBER 2025

WATCH IT ALL HAPPEN



In 2018, an idea was brought to life.

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

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