

## O'Connor Dealers, Suppliers and Team members,

Please allow to me to take this time during the holiday season to thank our team members, suppliers and customers. As I reflect on this past year I would like to express how thankful I am to all of you for working with us through the most difficult year most of us have ever known. The year that started out with the excitement of celebrating 100 years of O'Connor in business now ends with the excitement of a vaccine to end the COVID pandemic. At O'Connor we find ourselves excited about the opportunities that 2021 will bring and thankful to have navigated the pandemic relatively unscathed thus far. May the Holiday Season bring you all joy and optimism as we head into 2021.



Greg Borr President - O'Connor Company

## The Future of the HVAC Trade Is Everyone's Shared Responsibility

*Manufacturers, distributors, trade organizations developing creative ways to combat labor shortages.*

*Authored By : Lisa Zierfuss  
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Talk to any professional at any level of the HVAC industry — from the hands-on contractors to the dealers where they buy their supplies to the manufacturers of everything from commercial compressors to foil tape — and they will all voice the same concern about the industry: a lack of new talent entering the trade. It's the same story in plumbing, painting, electrical, carpentry, and just about any skilled trade. Baby boomers are aging

into retirement. Rather than exploring careers in the trades, Gen X and millennials chose college in significantly higher numbers than previous generations. According to the Pew Research Center, 40 percent of millennial workers aged 25 to 29 had a bachelor's degree in 2016, compared to 32 percent of Gen Xers in 2000 and 26 percent of baby boomers in 1985. Hope lies in Gen Z — today's middle school and high school students who will soon be making decisions about their education and career paths. This is the future of the HVAC trade, and together, we share the responsibility of educating them on the opportunities available to them. Fortunately, many in the trades are stepping up to do just that. **Opportunities In The Trades** – The first hurdle the industry has to tackle may be the hardest. HVAC and other skilled trades have a real perception problem. As the Mike-RoweWORKS Foundation puts it, "Pop culture has glorified the 'corner office job' while unintentionally belittling the jobs that helped build the corner office." Education cuts have led to the limination of "shop" classes and

vocational programs — or, worse yet, conventional wisdom considers them options only suited to low-performing or poorly behaved students. One group working hard to combat such misconceptions is Ferguson Cares, the philanthropic arm of the \$18.4 billion distribution company which is committed to building partnerships with transformational non-profit organizations, including those that focus on the skilled trades. Ferguson's initiatives vary from local grassroots efforts to national scholarship support to online education initiatives.

Melissa Hazelwood, senior manager for Ferguson Cares, has called out some of their most successful programs, including a partnership with Virginia's Isle of Wight County School District. Located near Ferguson's Newport News, Virginia, headquarters, 46 percent of the district's graduates don't go on to a four-year college or university, making it an ideal candidate for a career and technology education (CTE) program that focused on immersive hands-on learning opportunities. By arranging the schedule so students alternated a full week of CTE with a full week of academic courses, students were able

to carry out home renovation projects in the community for residents who were unable to afford them. In addition to funding the new program, Ferguson outfitted complete plumbing and HVAC labs for students.



For a broader reach, in March, Ferguson launched a website supporting its Skilled Trades Pay™ initiative. Phase one of the program is focused on awareness of what HVAC and other trades have to offer, with statistics on education costs, student debt, average salary, and advancement opportunities relative to a traditional university education. The site is currently being promoted through social media, YouTube ads, and other digital media to connect with the Gen Z target audience.

*“In addition to students, the site is also a resource for parents, guidance counselors and teachers,”* Hazelwood explained. *“We want the story to be about options — not that trades are better than college or vice versa, just that individual students may be better suited for one or the other and they have a choice.”*

Heating, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI), a trade group representing more than 480 distributor members who serve installation and service/replacement contractors in residential and commercial markets, has taken a creative and unexpected route to their Workforce Recruitment Initiative: *They’ve made a full-length film. Hot Commodity* is a documentary that follows a diverse group of HVAC professionals and tells the story of the varied paths they took to arrive in the industry. HARDI Director of Sales and Marketing Chris DeBoer describes how the documentary came about.

***“We felt that the problem we were facing was a lack of awareness of the opportunities in HVAC,” he said. “We just weren’t getting a fair shake as a career path — there’s this stigma of it being a dark, dirty job. We really needed to get the message to a younger audience about the job security, upward mobility, and salary open to them. And if you want them to pay attention, your educational content has to be entertaining.”***

The first key to HARDI’s strategy was finding compelling “characters” — real people in the industry that students would find relatable. “It’s not all ‘in your face’ about HVAC jobs,” said DeBoer. “We tell their personal stories, look at their lives as a whole.”

The second key was making sure the hour-long film was available to a mass audience, not just the industry. To that end, HARDI has developed a marketing and distribution campaign, and Hot Commodity is slated to stream on Amazon Prime this summer.

**Encouraging HVAC** - What about those who have explored, considered, and may well be on the path to a career in HVAC? Various members of the industry are also doing their part to encourage and reward those students in hopes they will continue on the path and share their experience with others. One of the most well-known is the Work Ethic Scholarship Program through the MikeRoweWORKS Foundation, which has given over \$5 million in scholarships to help people get trained in skilled labor.



Ferguson Cares donates to the scholarship fund and, in turn, is part of the

award process. Not only do they find the shared purpose a worthwhile investment, but they also find that it resonates with their customers, who have known for years that the skilled trades are an honorable profession.

Through its Johnstone Solutions University, distributor Johnstone Supply has gone beyond offering piecemeal HVAC training as a value add to its customers. In 2017, they achieved national accreditation by PAHRA (Partnership for Air Conditioning, Heating, Refrigeration), an independent, third-party organization established to certify that training programs meet or exceed industry standards in the areas of residential a/c and heating, light commercial a/c and heating, and commercial refrigeration.

In addition to online courses, Johnstone Solutions University offers live, hands-on training at three locations in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Indianapolis.

# Shurtape

TECHNOLOGIES

Shurtape Technologies LLC has also explored a variety of opportunities to support students in skilled trades through its Tape University initiative. Focused local programs have included a partnership with local businesses to help sponsor a special event with the Detroit Construction Academy, which included awarding one **\$2,500** Tape University scholarship in 2018 and two **\$2,500** Tape University scholarships in 2019.

Specific to the HVAC industry was Shurtape’s five-year Mission: HVAC program. From 2015 through 2019, Shurtape selected three students pursuing training for a career in the HVAC industry and challenged their practical knowledge and problem-solving skills with a series of 10 missions, which included anything from interviewing experienced HVAC professionals about their product selection processes and work habits to speculating on the skills that will be necessary for the future of the industry. Each mission **was worth**

\$500, and over the course of the program, Shurtape gave \$75,000 in scholarships to support future HVAC professionals. Since closing out the program, Shurtape has focused on Tape University, its online knowledge center for commercial and industrial tape solutions.



**Working Together Beyond 2020** - The unprecedented situation brought about by COVID-19 has only served to prove how essential the skilled trades really are.

**No matter the circumstances, we will always need to keep our homes comfortable, keep food supplies refrigerated, and maintain the climate and air quality in our hospital facilities and other essential facilities.**

HVAC professionals will continue to be in demand, and across the industry, we must all continue to work together to build the future of the trades. In the words of HARDI's DeBoer:

*“There are so many programs out there. The more we can team up and share the same message, the more effective we will be.”*

## Pulse Predictions - PostCovid-19 HVAC World

*Authored By : Nir Kushnir  
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### Remote Diagnostics will become a capability homeowners expect.

Most HVAC brands provide dealers with free access to a dashboard that shows any HVAC system's performance indicators that include a communicating thermostat. The value of pre-diagnosis before service appointment will soon become a standard expectation.



**More dealers will implement Field Service Management solutions.** COVID-19 tested our ability to work remotely. Managing even a small number of trucks without an integrated field service management solution introduced a difficult challenge for small and mid-size businesses over the past few months.



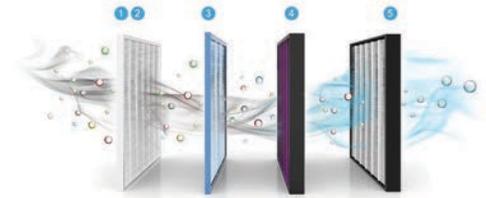
**More homeowners will sign up for maintenance plans.** One of the most valuable features of a maintenance plan is priority access to emergency service. Privilege homeowners learn to appreciate when the availability of providers is limited.

**Agreement & Investment Plans:** (includes two annual maintenance visits: one cooling and one heating)

1 Year Protection Plan \$149 <sup>00</sup>	2 Year Protection Plan \$269 <sup>00</sup>	3 Year Protection Plan \$359 <sup>00</sup>	4 Year Protection Plan \$432 <sup>00</sup>	5 Year Protection Plan \$489 <sup>00</sup>
<small>Additional System *99 vs. Minimum Savings *48</small>	<small>Additional System *112 vs. Minimum Savings *57</small>	<small>Additional System *126 vs. Minimum Savings *71</small>	<small>Additional System *141 vs. Minimum Savings *86</small>	<small>Additional System *159 vs. Minimum Savings *104</small>

Minimum savings based on standard price maintenance and does not take into consideration the value of service and equipment discounts. Multiple heating and cooling systems in the same home is discounted 40% (calculated above).

**Increase in the popularity of indoor air quality and other added value solutions.** Beyond the focus on keeping indoor air healthy and clean, homeowners will be looking for options to keep their homes more secure, safer, healthier and energy-efficient.



**Trust signals will continue to be a central part of lead generation.** The old form of customer referrals is transitioning to online community referrals. Homeowners are no longer restricted to their particular circles when recommending a contractor through an online review. The need to limit contact with others during COVID-19 highlighted the importance of vetting providers through online reviews and other trust signals such as the Google Guaranteed shield.



**Some HVAC brands will start selling their products directly to homeowners.** The HVAC industry is ready for a large-scale D2C (direct to consumer) channel. This change is not directly related to COVID-19. Still, it seems reasonable to assume that furnaces, air conditioners, and heat pumps will not remain one of the only items homeowners cannot purchase online, directly from the manufacturer. The main obstacle remains the need to keep the installer engaged and interested in a model where they only charge an installation fee. Not an easy task to tackle, but with the opportunities of efficiency, it is just a question of time until a significant industry player (or maybe even a newcomer) will figure it out.

## How To Get Google Reviews:

*It's important to know why Google reviews matter and how to get more. Google reviews help potential customers choose your business & build trust. Here's how.*

Article By: Podium - Podium.com



Content is king and your business' online reviews matter. Now more than ever, it's important for businesses to get Google reviews. That's because customers want detailed first-hand information from their online peers, whom they trust, to help them make decisions and become informed about the customer experience. Let's talk a little more about Google reviews! We'll cover:

- Why Google reviews are important (the benefits of getting reviewed)
- How Google reviews help with rankings
- How to get more Google reviews for your business
- A few simple how-tos on leaving and deleting Google reviews
- All about Google My Business

### Here are three reasons why Google reviews are so important:

**1.) Google reviews improve local search ranking.** One of the biggest benefits online reviews bring to your business is a boost in local search ranking. Knowing how to improve local SEO is important because if customers can't even find your business when they're actively searching, how can they possibly make a purchase from you?

Having Google reviews helps with rankings and revenue. Online reviews on your Google Maps listing help your business stand out from the crowd. That's how you make an impact. More importantly, it means your business is highlighting the fact that you offer a great service or product, and that customers love you.

**2.) Google reviews increase trust and credibility.** This might sound strange, but a vast majority of 18-34 year olds (91% to be exact) trust online reviews as much as recommendations from family and friends. That is, they do as long as the reviews meet certain criteria like (1) authenticity, (2) being in the right industry, and (3) having multiple reviews on the same site.

Because Google is one of the most used and trusted search engines, people are willing to give that same trust and credibility to Google reviews that they give to reviews from trusted peers.

**3.) Google reviews influence purchase decisions.** Online Google reviews can be just what a consumer needs to push them from consideration to purchase. A lot of times when consumers are reading Google reviews, they are looking for confirmation that they are making the right decision.

Positive online reviews can give just the validation consumers are looking for when making a choice. However, the opposite can also be true. If your business has a low star rating or a lot of recent negative Google reviews, customers could be pushed toward the competition instead. In fact, Podium found that "3.3 is the minimum star rating of a business consumers would consider engaging with."

To Continue Reading go to:

[Podium.com/article/google-reviews/](https://podium.com/article/google-reviews/)



### Employee Highlight - Jim Tramposh

*Retiring after 21 years of service*



Jim Tramposh is retiring this year and has been a Corporate Buyer and part of the O'Connor team for 21 years. His enthusiasm and spirit of all things O'Connor shines through in all he does. Jim started his HVAC career back in 1968. He worked in the warehouse of his father's company, Refrigeration Equipment Company (RECO). His father started RECO in Kansas City, Missouri in 1939 and was one of the first of its type in the area. Jim has been around the HVAC industry his whole life.

Jim started working at O'Connor Company February 1999. He worked at the old North Kansas City location on the inside sales counter. He eventually moved into the purchasing department ten years ago. Jim was also an instructor at Johnson County Community College teaching HVAC Basics for a short time.

Jim enjoys spending time with his wife, of 45 years, Vicki. They have three children and he loves being a grandpa to five grandchildren. Jim also has a passion for classic cars, especially his two 1961 Corvettes. He has entered and won many car shows the over the years. Jim was also a private pilot at one time.



**We thank Jim for his friendship and loyalty to the company and wish him a happy & healthy retirement!**

BUILT TO A HIGHER STANDARD

*American Standard*

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING