



PHCC NEWS

An advertorial section sponsored by the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors - National Association (www.phccweb.org)

PHCC's service groups assess the year ahead

What's ahead in 2007? What are the biggest challenges, and how will they be addressed? The Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors - National Association (PHCC) asked these questions of its enhanced service group chairmen in end-of-the-year interviews. The chairmen are Keith Bienvenu, Quality Service Contractors (QSC); Les DenHerder, Construction Contractors' Alliance (CCA); and Tom Gent, Union-Affiliated Contractor (UAC).

Read on to see what's on the minds of the leaders of new construction, service and repair and signatory contractors in 2007.

What do you think will be the biggest challenges in 2007 facing the segment of the industry you represent?

New construction

"For the majority of our members, it is very difficult to find and keep qualified workers," DenHerder says. "There are many areas of the country where member companies can't take on more available work because they just don't have enough employees."



Les DenHerder

In 2007, the downturn in the residential market clearly is a factor. As home-building work slows, CCA's residential contractors are dealing with the decline through diversification and a focus on being as efficient as possible, he says.

Many other challenges are facing new construction contractors, such as rising insurance costs, relationships with general contractors, increasing material costs, new technologies and effective office/field communications.

"However, I would have to say CCA's primary constant challenge is to stay a step ahead in the industry and in our businesses," DenHerder says. "Our market is constantly changing; we need to stay on top of the latest trends to adapt to this change."

Service and repair

The results of a quick survey of the QSC membership point to two areas that represent challenges: educating non-member



Keith Bienvenu

competing contractors and recruiting employees into the trade.

"We need to help them learn their cost of doing business and to charge the proper rates (what their service is worth) so that they can in turn recruit and pay technicians what they are worth and provide benefits," Bienvenu says. "If we can help them understand all that is involved in running a business and setting their pricing accordingly, then the profitability will increase and we can pay techs what they are worth. And they will be available. People will enter a field of work they see a future in."

Signatory contractors

"Our biggest challenge in 2007 will be finding skilled workers," Gent says.

As United Association General President Bill Hite has stated, "It's not just a union problem; it's everyone's problem."

As part of its collaborative efforts with the UA, Gent says, the UAC also will focus on these priorities:

- Support for the UA's union and apprentice journeyman training, which UAC believes is the best in the world.
- Endorse the National Residential Plumbing Agreement, an innovative program that allows contractors to compete in the residential market.
- Be involved in the efforts of the Plumbing Council, which promotes expanding relationships between UA locals and contractor associations.
- Continue to represent plumbing contractors on the Joint Committees at the national level in such areas as arbitration, training and codes.

What are some ways members of your association will tackle these challenges?



Tom Gent

CCA

"CCA has found that the true value of our group comes from sharing ideas and best practices with each other," DenHerder says. "Company owners will continue to do that in our regular meetings, shop visits and e-mail discussions. At the same time, we have expanded CCA's networking and educational opportunities to our middle managers.

"As a result, the second-tier employees also are exchanging ideas that are helping our companies become more successful."

QSC

QSC members will continue to promote the advantages of membership in PHCC and QSC to contractors within their geographic area, Bienvenu says. QSC in turn will promote education to the industry through PHCC and the trade press.

"It is our goal to make our educational programs available to all with the hope of raising the industry standards of operating a profitable business," he says.

UAC

UAC will continue its course of providing a unified voice for the signatory contractors within PHCC to make sure signatory issues are represented, Gent says.

UAC also will continue to meet with the UA leadership on a regular basis to present the views of the PHCC signatory contractors and participate in joint programs with the UA.

"Many of our 'hot topics' will be explored in-depth at our annual Unity Meeting, as well as events at the PHCC national convention," he says. "These meetings are always great ways for our members to network, learn and better the industry."



Enhance your niche through PHCC

If you're looking for education and networking geared specifically to your business, PHCC's enhanced service groups could be the answer. Here's more about each of them and what they offer.

CCA

The Construction Contractors' Alliance represents PHCC's plumbing and mechanical new construction contractors specializing in commercial, residential, institutional and industrial work. CCA's mission statement is, "To enhance the profitability and professionalism of the CCA members' businesses through education and networking opportunities."

The group offers two meetings a year for all members, seminars for middle managers, Webinars, an e-mail discussion list, focus groups for residential and commercial contractors and many networking opportunities. Contractors who are interested in CCA are offered the opportunity to attend a CCA meeting and see what the group is all about. Should the contractor decide to join, the meeting registration fee will be applied toward membership dues.

QSC

The Quality Service Contractors' mission statement is "to provide the quality service contractor with training, technology and professional development, resulting in superior client service and satisfaction."

QSC is constantly promoting the advantages of membership with advertising in the industry trade press. To coincide with the marketing efforts, QSC invites any non-member to attend a Power Meeting one time just to check out the organization. This tactic has produced a 95% join rate from non-members attending Power Meetings. QSC also offers a 100% money-back guarantee after the first year if a new member does not feel that QSC is right for them. Only one question is asked: How did QSC fail to meet their expectations?

UAC

Union-Affiliated Contractors was formed to establish, maintain and nurture a working relationship between the United Associa-

tion-employing segment of PHCC-National Association and the UA. Its membership is very diverse across the U.S.

The UAC provides many membership benefits, including: a unified voice for the signatory contractors within PHCC to make sure unique issues are addressed and interests represented; opportunities to meet with UA leadership on a regular basis to discuss the views of the PHCC signatory contractors; representation and/or participation on joint programs with the UA; the *Messenger*, UAC's quarterly newsletter, designed to keep members up-to-date on key issues; high-level networking opportunities with contractors and local UA officials; and timely, comprehensive educational programs covering emerging technologies and best practices in the industry.

Any union signatory contractor with a desire to improve his or her business, as well as have a greater voice with the UA, should be a member of UAC.

Remember that membership in PHCC is a prerequisite for any of the groups. It is easy to join PHCC. Call 800/533-7694, or visit www.phccweb.org to get started.