

# NY Connection



Official Magazine for the New York State PHCC

Winter 2020

## New York State Scaffolding Law

p11

## The Known Unknowns

p12

A photograph of two firefighters in full protective gear, including helmets with lights and air tanks. They are standing in front of a large, intense fire. The firefighter in the foreground is holding a wooden tool, possibly a pike pole. The background is filled with bright orange and yellow flames and sparks.

**EMERGENCY!**  
**EMERGENCY!**

p16

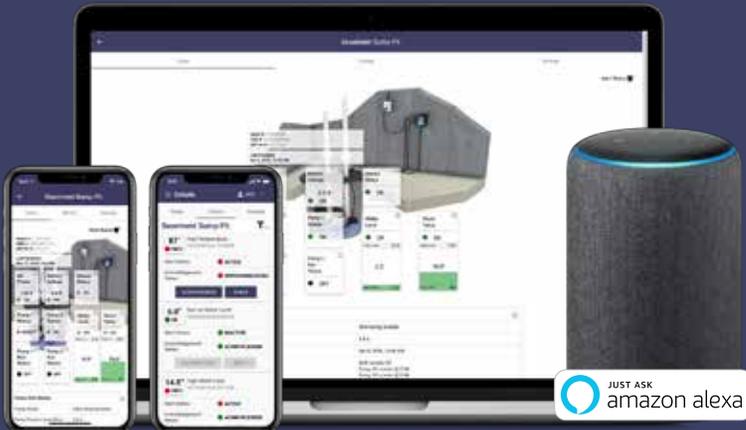
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# President's Message

By Ryan Truncali



**A**s the New York State Association of PHCC, we are very proud to congratulate Hunter Botto as the newly elected PHCC–National President and Joe Cornetta PHCC–National Secretary. These members from the New York State PHCC currently hold two of the four PHCC–National Executive Committee positions, which is remarkable in our current day and age. The New York State association will continue to support Hunter and Joe in their endeavors.

With the unknowns of the coronavirus still looming, in conjunction with our Board of Directors, we have decided to cancel the 2021 PHCC State Convention. We understand that many members look forward to the education and networking this convention affords us. We are currently looking into alternate in-state locations that will provide our members with the same convention experience we are used to. Keeping in mind the health and safety of our members is of the utmost importance.

Stay safe, stay well, and enjoy the holiday season.

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**“We are currently looking into alternate in-state locations that will provide our members with the same convention experience we are used to.”**

**– Ryan Truncali,  
PHCC President**

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## New York State Local Associations

### 1. PHCC of Long Island

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### 2. Associated PHCC of Rochester New York

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### 3. WNY Association of Plumbing & Mechanical Contractors

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### 4. Plumbers Contractors Association of New York City

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*Get in touch with other contractors and suppliers in your area through these local chapters.*



# New PHCC—National President Hunter Botto Poised to Strengthen Membership and Leverage Opportunities in a Pandemic World

By Staff Writer, PHCC—National Association



Hunter Botto

**P**repared to help member contractors “work smarter, not harder,” gain strength in numbers, and leverage pandemic-related challenges into new opportunities, Hunter Botto was installed as the newest president of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association (PHCC) Oct. 1 during **PHCCCONNECT2020**.

Botto pledged to build on the advancements underway and strive to make them even better. He also encouraged PHCC members to get involved with the organization, stating: “It is our responsibility to be the leaders moving forward and teach the next generation ... let all of us ‘get it done’ ... I’m ready; we are ready; all of us need to be ready to launch into the new normal.”

A third-generation plumber, Botto has a long history with his family business — Botto Brothers Plumbing & Heating in Hicksville, New York. In 1980, he was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, where he served as a boiler technician. He attended the Mechanics Institute in New York City from 1980-1984 and became a licensed master plumber in 1989. Several years later, his father retired, and Botto took over Botto Brothers, assuming ownership (together with his brother Roger) in 1993.

Along the way, Botto has moved through the ranks at PHCC, from local and state levels to leadership positions at PHCC—National; he has served as chapter president of PHCC of New York, as a zone director and, most recently, as PHCC—National vice president and president-elect. He also served as chair of the PHCC Political Action Committee for several years, leading initiatives to strengthen PHCC’s advocacy efforts.

The new PHCC president credits much of his professional success to his direct involvement in the organization at the local, state and national levels. In fact, supporting the PHCC chapter network and involving younger members in leadership are some of his priorities as PHCC president. He also is committed to continuing PHCC’s vigorous advocacy efforts, workforce development programs and other initiatives included in the organization’s strategic

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**“It is our responsibility to be the leaders moving forward and teach the next generation ... let’s all of us ‘get it done’ ... I’m ready; we are ready; all of us need to be ready to launch into the new normal.”**

**— Hunter Botto**  
**President of PHCC—National**

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plan. And, in this COVID-19 world, he sees opportunities for PHCC members — essential workers committed to protecting public health and safety and the environment — that their association can support by providing helpful resources for their businesses and representation of their interests on Capitol Hill.

Check out more insights from PHCC’s new president in these profiles in industry trade publications:

- *Plumbing & Mechanical*  
[https://digital.bnpmmedia.com/publication/?m=8211&i=674680&p=70&oly\\_enc\\_id=8908Go472478HoS](https://digital.bnpmmedia.com/publication/?m=8211&i=674680&p=70&oly_enc_id=8908Go472478HoS)
- *PHCP Pros*  
<https://www.phcppros.com/articles/12000-interview-with-incoming-phcc-president-hunter-botto>

# Local Chapter Reports

## PCA of Long Island

**By Ryan Truncali, President of PCA-LI**

Plumbing Contractors Association of Long Island members have been working very hard during the past emergency crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic by working as essential workers to stand up several additional hospital areas on Long Island at SUNY Old Westbury and SUNY Stony Brook, among other places. Our members were credited by Governor Cuomo and others for their fine work under some extreme conditions.

In addition, our members have been working to continue our charitable giving to several organizations that have been assisting those who suffered loss of employment or illness during this pandemic. We continue to provide a caring and compassionate outreach to help our fellow Long Islanders.

Finally, our association has been working on Wicks Law enforcement as we continue to monitor public bids to ensure that they are following the letter and intent of the law. To date, we have been able to work with local engineering companies to correct issues relating to the drafting of bid packages and local municipalities on the bid opening procedures to ensure fairness and equity in the process in accordance with the law.

## PHCC of Long Island

**By Don Conway, PHCC President**

What a year it has been! During these difficult times PHCC of Long Island has worked, and continues to work, diligently to ensure that members are receiving vital information and have access to essential resources as we all navigate through the pandemic.

PHCC LI has been hosting virtual events for members and the local industry. These events have included a trivia night fundraiser, where a portion of proceeds were donated to Make-A-Wish Foundation, as well as informative meetings with topics ranging from COVID-19 regulations to code updates.

We are greatly looking forward to a new event series that will begin in November. PHCC LI associate members will have the opportunity to do an in-person presentation, of the topic of their choosing, to a small group of contractors. This will also be offered as a virtual event. Whether in person or virtual, the goal of these events remains the same, to allow for associate members to reconnect with contractors who they may not have seen in a while due to the pandemic.

Our organization recently celebrated the accomplishments of two past presidents. Hunter Botto and Joe Cornetta were installed on to the Board of Directors of PHCC National Association. Hunter is now the National President and Joe is National Secretary. Hunter and Joe have always made a great team. We are very proud of them and look forward to the great work they will do on the national level! Congratulations Hunter and Joe!

*Continued on page 8*

# Local Chapter Reports *continued*

## PHCC of WNY

By Steve Reddy, President of PHCC-WNY

COVID — What a pain in the ...!

Here we are close to the end of a terrible year! 2020 will go down in history as *annus horribilus* as my favorite Auntie once said.

As we go about our respective businesses mindful of the impact this pandemic is having on us all, we attempt to navigate the treacherous waters of government legislation. The legislation with its continually moving parts, one day this, another day that, driven by politicians who skew statistics to suit their own agendas that truly have no business screwing the population during this time.

We all can lament upon its impact but truly except for a few months in the beginning we are all operating as before. The construction industry has the most robust individuals working to keep this country up and running.

If government spent a day on a construction site they would better understand how they should run their municipalities. I personally have not seen or heard of a case where COVID has spread on a jobsite; commonsense tells us how to behave and perform our tasks. The politicians do nothing more than inflict legislation upon us where they can levy fines, close businesses, make petty government officials into omnipotent, jackbooted thugs threatening one and all! Thankfully, we are not in the bar and restaurant business as their minefields are trickier to navigate.

In closing, stay safe and diligent, construction is the backbone of the economy, looking forward to a better 2021.



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# **NYSPHCC**

# **Legislative Update**

**By Nick Barella, Senior Advisor Park Strategies, LLC/Capitol Group, LLC**

## **2020 ELECTION OVERVIEW**

We are two weeks away from election day and President Trump and former Vice President Biden have squared off in two debates with a third planned for October 22nd. The outlook from the political forecasters give Joe Biden an edge over the President in the race for the necessary electoral votes.

The race for the White House has come down to President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence versus former Vice President Joe Biden and his vice-presidential nominee, California Sen. Kamala Harris. While initially Biden and Trump's battleground seemed to be issues of trade and middle-class growth, now the candidates are focused on how the country will navigate the economic downturn created by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Other key issues are healthcare, climate change, gun rights, trade and tariffs, immigration, Iran and abortion rights.

A new issue has emerged regarding Vice President Biden's son Hunter and his emails that allegedly indicate Hunter's involvement with a Chinese energy firm. These emails appear to show Hunter Biden pursuing a lucrative energy business deal in China and possibly cutting his father in on the action. It remains to be seen what impact these emails may have on the Presidential race.

This year's 35 US Senate contests will determine whether Republicans are able to retain the majority in the chamber or if Democrats take control. Republicans currently hold 53 seats, but several incumbents are facing strong challenges that could tip the balance in the Senate. Democrats are on offense, defending just 12 seats to Republicans' 23. Two of those Democrat-held seats — Alabama and Michigan — bookend this list of the seats most likely to flip partisan control. The remaining eight seats on the list are Republican-held. Democrats need a net gain of four seats to win control of the chamber, or three if Joe Biden wins the White House since the vice president breaks ties in the Senate.

Political analysts believe that the Democrats will keep the majority in the US House of Representatives and are likely to pick up a number of seats. The electoral environment currently favors the Democrats, and Republicans have more open seats to defend. One reason Democrats are starting in such a strong position is few of their incumbents are retiring or seeking another office.

Of course, none of this rule out the GOP retaking the House in November. For one thing, the generic ballot margin could narrow and the electoral environment could grow more competitive as we get closer to November. This is especially true if the contest between Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden heats up. A good performance from Trump could make a big difference in the House, as the House map already has a slight Republican lean.

## **NYS ELECTION OUTLOOK**

The June 23rd primary elections took its biggest toll on the Democrat Assembly majority. A slew of progressive challengers upset entrenched incumbents in the New York Legislature cementing their movement's influence in Albany and making it likely that the state government will become one of the most liberal in the nation.

Most, if not all, of the primary wins over Assembly incumbents occurred in safely Democratic seats, meaning the primary winner is almost assured of winning a seat in the Legislature in November. All told, the Assembly could have nearly two dozen new members when the next Legislature is formally seated in January. The Assembly will still have a significant Democrat majority after the November election.

The NYS Senate will be the house to watch as a waive of retirements by incumbent Republican Senators may result in further losses. Democrats currently control 40 of the 63 Senate seats. If they pick up two more in 2020, they will have a super majority, which would allow them to override bills that are vetoed by Governor Cuomo. That could fundamentally shift the power dynamic once again in Albany, since the Assembly Democrats already have a veto-proof majority.

However, in the last few weeks, a new independent expenditure group founded by Ronald Lauder has emerged as a financial lifeline for the Republicans. That group, Safe Together New York, has poured \$2.9 million into radio, digital, and television advertisements aimed at six State Senate races, including four with Democratic incumbents. There are Democrats wondering if the effort is to prevent their party from winning a two-thirds supermajority. So, by giving money to Republicans in State Senate races, Mr. Lauder may be indirectly helping the Governor.

*Continued on page 10*

# NYSPHCC Legislative Report *continued*

Among the Democrats being targeted by Mr. Lauder's PAC are three first-term incumbents in moderate districts on Long Island, including in Suffolk County. A key target is Senator Monica R. Martinez along with two other Senate Democrats on Long Island, Kevin Thomas and Jim Gaughran as well as Senator Andrew Gounardes of Brooklyn. Two upstate Democratic candidates, Jim Barber and John Mannion, running for seats vacated by Republicans are also facing negative ads paid by the PAC.

## PENDING LEGISLATION

As reported in our July 24 update, **S7644 Breslin/ A9117 Cusick, payment in construction contracts** had passed both houses of the Legislature. This legislation was supported by the NYSPHCC and many of the state's construction associations. The bill has not yet been transmitted to the Governor for his action.

This bill would establish a new comprehensive definition of "substantial completion" for public construction projects under State Finance Law and General Municipal Law. This bill would define substantial completion as

when the work required by the contractor with the public owner is sufficiently completed so that the public owner may occupy or utilize the work for its intended use.

It would reform the contract payment process of retainage for owners, contractors, and subcontractors by establishing new procedures and timelines to clearly define all remaining items to be completed by the contractor and subcontractor. Within 30 days, the public owner shall submit to the contractor a written list describing all remaining items required to be completed by the contractor. No later than seven days, the contractor shall submit to each subcontractor a written list of all remaining items to be completed by the subcontractor. By establishing a new comprehensive definition of substantial completion of public construction projects and reforming the contract payment process of retainage, needless disputes and delays between owners and contractors would be greatly diminished.

The NYSPHCC will update you when the bill is acted upon by the Governor.

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# PHCCCONNECT2020

## Bringing Us All Together Through the Power of Technology

Determined to safely proceed with a reimagined annual convention despite challenges presented by a global pandemic, the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors–National Association (PHCC) tapped into creativity, adaptability and modern technology to host a virtual **PHCCCONNECT2020**, Sept. 30–Oct. 1.

The comprehensive event — the first annual convention held online in the association’s 138-year history — provided a rewarding opportunity for p-h-c contractors, industry partners and PHCC’s affiliated groups to reconnect as an industry. With the theme “Expand Your Vision for Success,” the conference offered a value-packed line-up of education and networking opportunities.

## New York State Scaffolding Law

By Garrett Wilson, Claims Manager, Hamond Safety Management

**A letter, signed by 44 business advocacy and local government groups, was sent to Governor Cuomo’s attention on September 29 requesting a repeal of the New York Scaffold Law as part of his budget proposal for the state’s next fiscal year.**

**T**he statute has been on the books since the 1800s; it puts the blame of workplace accidents solely on the shoulders of the business regardless of the worker’s relative responsibility in their own injury. New York remains the only state in the country with a law such as this one.

Supporters of the Scaffold Law claim the statute is essential to keeping workers safe while opponents of the law assert there is no evidence the law actually leads to safer workplaces. The law does not provide employees any legal incentive to be responsible for their own safety.

New York is expected to face a multibillion-dollar budget shortfall primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Repealing the Scaffold Law would reportedly save New York taxpayers \$700 million and private businesses as much as \$1.4 billion per year. On top of that, the Scaffold Law adds as much as 7 percent to the construction costs that other states don’t have due to the increase of insurance costs.

The savings from the law repeal would promote economic growth which would result in additional funds towards school districts, local governments and the private sectors.



# The Known Unknowns

By Mark Valentini, PHCC Director of Legislative Affairs

This column is being drafted approximately 17 days before Election Day. By the time you read this, we will either know who won the Presidential election, or else ballots are still being counted (possibly amidst litigation challenging the results from either political party). It's also possible we won't know if Republicans retain control of the U.S. Senate. Election turnout will guide PHCC policy priorities for the next two years, so the sooner we know, the sooner we can prepare.

The passage of another COVID relief bill and the inclusion of PHCC priorities therein is a more immediate concern. Though House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and President Trump have failed to agree on a COVID package (and the Senate refusing to consider anything that costs more than \$500 billion), Congress agrees on including most of our priorities in the next bill: extension of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the eligibility of 501(c)6 organizations to participate in it, and reversing guidance issued by the Internal Revenue Service prohibiting deductions for qualified expenses paid with PPP funds so that the PPP is tax-free the way Congress intended when it established the program. Where there is disagreement is whether to include liability protection against frivolous litigation for businesses that adhere to federal, state, and local COVID-19 safety guidelines. If Democrats keep the House (which is expected) and flip the Senate, and no COVID deal is agreed to before the end of the year, liability protection will not be included when the new Congress reconvenes in 2021 to pass a multi-trillion dollar relief bill. If Republicans keep the Senate, liability protection will remain a priority. The only way liability protection remains a possibility should Democrats take the Senate, would be if economic pressure dictates another major spending bill be passed before the end of the year while Republicans still hold the Senate, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell forces the Democrats to include liability protection. Congress must pass a COVID relief bill sooner rather than later.

One thing is  
**CERTAIN**  
licensure and decarbonization  
are two issues that will be  
at the top of our agenda in the  
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particularly at the  
state level.

One thing is certain: licensure and decarbonization are two issues that will be at the top of our agenda in the coming year, regardless of election outcome, particularly at the state level.

**Licensure** is important to PHCC. It protects the profession against the scourge of mediocrity prevalent in many building trades perpetrated by self-described “handymen” who perform work on the cheap. In Texas, the state legislature

will reconvene in 2021 and it will consider once again whether to sunset the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (BPE). We are all familiar with multi-state efforts to eliminate the plumbing license. Texas is considering the bold step of simply doing away with the state license and deferring to local governments and municipalities to determine licensing standards, creating a patchwork of inconsistent regulations that will make it difficult for licensed plumbers to work in multiple jurisdictions to say the least. In other states, the elimination of licensure doesn't look quite like that but the outcome is the same. Louisiana attempted to pass legislation earlier this year that would allow licensing reciprocity with any state. North Dakota passed a bill last year allowing property owners to perform any kind of work on their primary residences. While not outright disposing of state licensure, these states are watering-down licensing standards which is a slippery slope. State legislators need to understand that professional trades like plumbing and HVAC are not the sorts of job anyone can do.

*Continued on page 14*

Policymakers cannot state they respect a skilled trade while at the same time try to eliminate the means to determine if one commands the skillset to perform that trade. They either respect your trade or they don't, and their stance on professional licensure is the determining factor.

**Decarbonization** is an issue that has gained considerable traction in the past year and will continue to do so regardless of who occupies the White House. In an effort to move the nation's energy infrastructure completely away from fossil fuels, local governments in California and around the country are voting to prohibit natural gas installations in new construction, and in some cases requiring retrofits so that buildings are powered exclusively by electricity sourced from windmills, solar panels and renewables. Plumbing and HVAC contractors could lose significant business as a result. New York underwent a natural gas ban moratorium last year resulting from Governor Cuomo's refusal to allow the extension of a natural gas pipeline into the state

to meet growing demand; National Grid is now having natural gas shipped via carbon-intensive vehicles such as freight trains and heavy trucks. A Biden presidency risks making this a more national issue as federal laws and regulations are expected to pass under his administration that would incentivize further natural gas bans in order to hit environmentalists' 2050 goal of being completely carbon-neutral. PHCC has teamed up with other contracting organizations as well as stakeholders representing restaurants, retired citizens, and laborers, all of whom have a stake in the continued use of natural gas as part of the diverse energy portfolio our country needs to keep energy costs affordable.

The challenges we face both as an industry and a nation will not cease when the election outcome is determined. Contact your PHCC state or local executive, or PHCC National's government affairs team ([government@naphcc.org](mailto:government@naphcc.org)) to learn more about how you can get involved in PHCC's advocacy efforts.



# Fast Track to Service Plumbing Course

”A training course for service contractors *by* service contractors.”

PHCC Educational Foundation’s upcoming *Fast Track to Service Plumbing* course will provide business owners with a comprehensive program to train safe, efficient, and job-ready technicians.

This revamped program, originally developed by Quality Service Contractors (QSC), will give participants focused and timely service and repair plumbing training.

The *Fast Track to Service Plumbing* course includes over thirty training modules critical for the success of today’s plumbing professionals.

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# EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!

By Bill Harrison

**D**oes it seem there is always some kind of emergency to deal with? Another fire to fight? Something else going wrong? I doubt that you have ever dealt with the same issue more than once, right? From years of experience I know that you can relate to this scenario. You have often said that you would find a solution if you could only find the time. But you are busy right? There is only so much time in a day and besides, you have so many meetings to deal with each week.

What is a person to do you might ask. It's OK. The Coach says there is a solution to every problem. I know, we aren't supposed to talk about problems, but they do exist. Of course, if you believe there is no solution to this one, you will be correct. Let's be clear, some solutions are more palatable than others, some less expensive than others, but there is always a solution.

We must learn to slow down so we can go faster. We rush off to take care of an emergency before we even understand the extent of the situation. When things have gone wrong we must pull all the information from those involved before we determine a solution. When folks screw up, and it can happen on any given day, are they always forthright and give the full story? Your experience

should indicate the answer is probably not. You must get very good at asking more questions, and more questions, until you get the full story. Is it possible that sometimes a team member might exaggerate the situation?

Would you react differently if the customer just mentioned an issue, as opposed to them breathing fire when they “mentioned” it? We need to discover all the peripheral issues around what is going on; not just the “facts.” If necessary, we might want to get the customer’s side of the story directly. No, the customer is not always right; but we must get their perspective. When time is an issue, it never hurts to check the GPS from the service truck. This has reduced the issue in a big way when the time issue comes up.

Now we can look at some other things that prevent or create problems. Have you ever sent a tech you knew was not fully qualified to do a job? “But he or she was the only one available,” I have heard. “We need to respond to customers as soon as possible.” Well, how did that work out for you? In my experience, it is not a great way to get a customer for life. If we had to send someone back who was qualified to deal with the issue, I’m sure the customer was not overwhelmed with your service. What do you think?

Are your dispatchers aware of the skill sets of your techs so they can dispatch the right tech to the right job? This is not that easy to develop, but many clients have made it happen, and it certainly reduces those kinds of emergencies. And of course, do you have an aggressive training program to consistently upgrade the skill sets of your techs? I know, we don’t have the time to do an aggressive training program with all the emergencies we are dealing with. But wait! Wouldn’t an aggressive training program reduce those problems? What is wrong with this picture?

Ever had an emergency because we didn’t have the proper material, right tools or “stuff” to do the job? The correct answer is, “Yes.” Do you have a system to have a second person check the material list for a job? And the second person must look at it with the attitude of “what is missing here?” Their focus will catch the small mistakes that cause big problems. Again, we are talking about slowing down so we can go faster. What happens when the truck is loaded? Do we double check that everything on the list is available that morning? Do we have two people signing off that we have everything? What about that drill we will need? Do we make sure it is on the truck and that it works? Do we make sure we have the correct drill bits? Or, do we accept the tech saying: “I think I have that on my truck.” I agree this might add ten or fifteen minutes to our departure time. But what happens if we have missed something and we discover it on the job? Will it take more than the ten or fifteen minutes to get it fixed? Again, the answer is, “Yes.”

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**“When folks feel appreciated and important, they are customers for life, and maybe their children and friends as well. Some of you may have found other ways to do this. Good competition benefits us all.”**

**— Bill Harrison, President of PLI, LLC**

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Much of our work, particularly installations, are somewhat repetitive. Do we have a checklist for the installation so no steps are short cutted or missed? Are team members responsible for signing off for each step to guarantee things are done right the first time? Indeed, when things are not done right the first time, we can have a big problem. Have you ever had a step missed and it caused the customer a lot of heartburn? When they pay money for an installation, what do they expect? Regardless if it’s an installation or a simple service call, they want it done right the first time. How can we reduce these emergencies? Slow down to go faster.

The whole idea is to do those things up front that prevent emergencies when we get to the customer’s home or business. Get a solid recruiting plan; not easy today. Train team members consistently, and put into practice solid processes and/or procedures. I prefer checklists. Really slow down to make certain everything is in place before we leave the shop. Have we double checked everything possible?

Do we have a culture of constantly looking for better ways to do things? Is everyone involved in seeking out a better way? Do we pay attention to the details?

In my experience, most team members and owners know what is needed. Now, just make the time to do it knowing that you will be eating the elephant a bite at a time. You will never find the block of time to get it all down in one gulp.

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# Moving Prospects Through the Funnel

**Funnel marketing is an overall concept with multiple marketing applications. The idea for the concept always starts wide at the top and narrows as it moves toward the bottom. In this case, getting to the bottom is your goal. That's the payoff point.**

Your marketing campaign, for example, promotes your message in the broadest media (whether TV, radio, newspaper, magazines, or SEO strategies). That's the top of the funnel. After the broad blast, the media begins to get more targeted when it's placed on billboards in a service territory, in direct mail to neighborhoods in that territory or in social media ads that target specific demographics. The marketing gets even narrower with email to customers in your database and social media posts for your followers.

There are also conversion funnels – which begin when a prospect visits your website, clicks a link, and provides an email address. The conversion funnel for contractors is still a series that starts wide (with the visit to a website,

possibly thanks to SEO or a follow-up triggered by exposure to other media). And it moves toward the next-step call to action – perhaps “Watch this video series on how to make your home more energy efficient.”

Getting the email address triggers a series of lead-nurturing emails. The emails build a case to schedule an appointment, which eventually leads to an estimate that leads to a closed sale. So, the funnel ends narrow (with a scheduled installation), or even narrower with the enrollment in a maintenance agreement during the installation.

Notably, your database is essential to funnel marketing. You can't very well bring the conversion funnel to a close without a database that connects the email address

with the drip email campaign. You'd be hard-pressed as well to move homeowners from prospect to customer, to returning customer, to loyal customer without a way of capturing contact info and keeping track of activity.

In a sense, being able to manage your customer data effectively is not unlike taking care of a cash register. Any money that comes into your company comes from your customers. If you lose, misuse, or neglect their record, you're missing out on their future business and your future payment.

Your database is as vital as your service vehicles as the tool you'll use to move customers from awareness of your company to loyal and referring client. Call-takers and techs should be able to access the history of estimates, service, installation, and customer contact, as well as details about systems and age of home. And records should be continually updated any time you have contact with a customer. Be sure to impress on your team the need to capture customer information, including updating cell numbers and email addresses.

The tech on the job may think he's just trying to get the air back on and head to the next house. But if he defers the necessary for the urgent, he'll miss valuable data that your company needs to serve the customer. Similarly, he should be able to check the records prior to heading to the home so that he arrives informed and ready to serve.

The more call-takers, techs, installers, and estimators know about your customer, the better they'll be able to help them. This ability to serve at a higher level is also essential to the bottom of the funnel – building a solid relationship with customers that keeps them coming back and referring friends and family. It's essential as well for maintaining contact through email for customized reminders and upsells specific to purchase history.

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**Hudson, Ink** ([www.hudsonink.com](http://www.hudsonink.com)) is a creative marketing firm for contractors. Readers can get a free 20-minute marketing consultation by sending a polite request to [freePHCCstuff@hudsonink.com](mailto:freePHCCstuff@hudsonink.com) or by calling 800-489-9099. Visit [www.hudsonink.com](http://www.hudsonink.com) for more marketing tips.

## 5 Key Takeaways for Creating Customers

Regardless of names and variations, your funnel marketing will go something like so:

**1. The customer has a problem** – The marketing funnel begins when customers become aware of a need, concern, or question. For example, should they replace their system, should they call for a tune-up or repair, or should they cross their fingers and hope for the best? How do they find the right company to solve this problem?

**2. The marketer has an answer** – Search engines and an integrated marketing campaign shows customers that you are the contractor they need. They learn this about your company as your media starts with broad reach (billboards, radio, SEM) and becomes more targeted (direct mail, email, social). With each exposure, a prospect is increasingly likely to make contact. If they find you through Google, they recognize your name from other marketing. They typically check your website regardless of the initial message source.

**3. Dripping marketing builds credibility** – An email series that deepens customer engagement begins with an automated campaign that is ready to go at initial contact. You get into your customer's attention span with nurturing content that educates and informs. They move toward installation. If you tighten the connection with retention marketing, eventually you get repeat business and referrals.

**4. The sales funnel or conversion funnel is a companion to the marketing funnel** – Prospects gain "awareness" of your company through broad media. They're in the "interest" stage as they become a lead. You nurture them as they move into the "consideration" stage. They're in the "intent" stage when it gets real and they're about to schedule. They're in the evaluation stage when they're selecting the best option from your solutions.

**5. Your database helps make this happen** – Your database is key to nurturing leads toward the close. It's also where you'll keep under lock and key (in the digital form of a secure platform) information that helps serve customers. This information enables a higher level of customer service and the ability to respond to customer concerns more effectively. It's not just contact information, but service history that can prompt a timely contact – such as a tune-up reminder, upsell, or warranty expiration. It's also how you maintain regular contact through newsletters, postcards, and holiday cards that are essential to a solid customer retention program.

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