

# CONTRACTOR

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## Hydronics just requires a little extra effort to sell

BY JOE FIEDRICH

*Hydronic heating authority*

HYDRONIC HEATING has always been a stepchild of the heating industry in large portions of the country. With all the innovations which have occurred within the hydronics industry over the past years, it's time for contractors to take a look at the huge advantages offered by hydronics for heating (and cooling) in both residential and commercial applications.

It will just take some sales effort by contractors. Here are the elements you should concentrate on to sell hydronic heating - comfort, system flexibility, efficiency, value added and payback.

Currently, the U.S. market share for hydronics is approximately 8%. When compared with Europe at almost 100%, we can see that there is a tremendous potential for growth within our market.

When comparing efficiency and comfort in hydronic systems with forced air there are only advantages. The contractor must focus on the overall heating system, the need for even temperatures throughout the building, weather-responsive controls and the quiet, comfortable warmth that hydronics can offer.

### Comfort

The single, most important advantage that hydronic heating has over hot air is the dramatically improved level of comfort people experience. Hydronic heating offers people a more natural habitat, which improves their physical well being. This, in turn, increases productivity and reduces absenteeism at the work place.

The reason is the reduction or elimination of air movement by a larger percentage of radiant heating. This is the key to the comfortable feeling we experience. It can be likened to the feeling we get on those warm spring days when the sun shines down with no chilling breeze. Radiant heat is the ideal form of heating the human

body. It eliminates the radiant cooling effect of surrounding walls and objects that you get from forced air. It can only be accomplished hydronically.

In a hydronic system, dust and allergy problems are also greatly reduced or eliminated.

### System flexibility

An important selling argument is the enormous flexibility of hydronic heating. A myriad of heat distribution options are available to meet

the customer's needs and desires: baseboard; cast iron radiators; convectors; steel panel radiators; kick space heaters; towel warmers; radiant wall, floor and ceiling heat; exterior surface heating (snow melting), domestic hot water and spa heating.

The system can be fueled with high- or low-temperature heat sources, providing total fuel flexibility and nonobsolescence. Think about this: since you only need low temperatures for floor and wall heating, you can easily do it with a heat pump or with solar. We are headed toward the 21st century and hydronic technology is now.

### System efficiency

Fuel efficiency is a special trademark of hydronic heating. Since the introduction of constant circulation systems coupled with outdoor reset controls, system water delivery temperatures can be kept extremely low, resulting in unheard of fuel efficiencies.

### Added value

Up-sell with hydronics: Use its diversity; suggest more than just baseboard; give your customers options. Use reset controls and setbacks. Combine floorheating for living areas, wall heating and towel warmers for bathrooms, panel radiation, radiators or baseboard for bedrooms.

Use snow melting systems for entry ways, both in commercial and residential buildings.

Suggest constant circulation and flow temperature modulation. Abandon intermittent circulation and make a good system better.

By utilizing all the advantages available for hydronic systems, you're offering an added value to your customer. Such a proposed system cannot be compared with the plain vanilla system of your competitor. Price becomes secondary. Such a system adds value to the property forever.

### **Payback**

When up-selling, prepare yourself. Arm yourself with concrete fuel reduction figures. Know your products and systems. Present your customer with realistic fuel reduction costs. Explain the workings of large heat emission surfaces such as panel radiators, or floor and wall heating. Demonstrate the use of constant circulation and outdoor reset controls. Use concrete examples and documentation to calculate the payback period for your customer which will justify any additional investment cost.

### **Worthy of pride**

Your customer should look at his heating system as an investment in his property, something of value attached to the thermostat hanging on the wall, something to show to his friends and relatives. When a system is put in with pride and is a showpiece, you can't get better advertising. Word will spread!

In regions where air conditioning is desirable or necessary, give your customer a separate cooling system. Ductless split systems are available and well-proven. Off-the-shelf high velocity or split air conditioning systems are readily available, complimenting any form of hydronic heat. You will be offering your customers the best of both worlds in heating and cooling.

*The author is president of Stadler Corp. (tel. 781/275-3122), a Bedford, Mass.-based supplier of hydronic heating equipment*