



**Article #3**

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## **The Perfect Recruit: What Do You Look for When Hiring?**

Let's face it, qualified, talented HVACR and plumbing service technicians available for hire are a rare commodity. It is extremely unlikely that an experienced technician is not already fully employed, and certainly rare to find one at the union hall. So, what do you do? Unless you are able to steal one away from an open-shop contractor, you need to plan ahead and start grooming a new workforce long before the expertise is needed.

What types of individuals make good technicians? Certainly one who is motivated to be in our industry and sees the potential opportunities if he/she works hard and stays committed. A positive attitude is an excellent trait for anyone you plan to hire, whether they currently have the technical skills or not. Since service technicians frequently work independently and are not part of a daily crew, someone that is self-motivated and dependable is apt to be more successful. Individuals who are curious, interested in learning how things work, and ask a lot of questions will most likely have an easier time grasping the specific technical knowledge required to excel in the HVACR and plumbing field. A teenager who likes to spend time tinkering with a car engine or gets involved with science fairs would be more apt to quickly grasp the complexities of how a refrigeration system works and relish the challenge. Again, those with an innate mechanical aptitude can be taught the specific skills required in our industry.

Potential recruits should also have good communication skills. You may wonder why this is important since they will just be working on equipment all day. However, keep in mind that service technicians are also the frontline contact with your customer. They need to be able to ask the right questions to determine what issues building owner and tenants are having with their facility's environment, address customer concerns in a calm and clear manner, and concisely communicate back to the office the situation they are dealing with and how they are remedying the issue. Oftentimes, this is not done through text messages or e-mails, which is the preferred communication style of today's younger generation, but through face-to-face discussions or phone conversations. Remember, your service technicians represent your company, and are often the only company employee your customers will ever see on a routine basis.

It is also important for potential recruits to have a strong academic background in certain areas to better prepare them for work in the field. Not to say they must be "A" students, but an understanding of these academic courses and preliminary experience will be very helpful to them and you moving forward. Look for candidates with coursework in:

- Math (algebra and geometry)
- Mechanical drawing
- Science (physics and chemistry)

- Computer science/Computer-aided design
  
- Electronics
- General business (sales and marketing)

Developing a top-of-the-line service technician requires a long-term investment and years of training and experience. Whether they start out as a tradesman or a summer intern, go through the apprenticeship program or learn through on-the-job training, finding that “perfect recruit” initially will help ensure future success and an enduring relationship with your company. Mechanical skills are important, but can be taught. Attitude, motivation, curiosity, and dependability are innate characteristics that cannot be learned but are often the most important to possess.

**Coming next month – UA Apprenticeship Schools and Service Training**