

PIPELINE

piping systems inc.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/INSTITUTIONAL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS

SPRING 2011

What Is The Future Of Hydronics?

Hydronic [hahy-**dron**-ik] - *adjective - of or pertaining to a heating system for a building in which the medium for carrying heat throughout the structure is circulating water, esp. when the circulation is aided by a pump.*

As the owner of a piping company, whenever I see the word “piping,” my interest perks up. Here is a reprint of an article I came across recently. If you follow our newsletter, you are probably getting the idea that 1) I read a lot, and 2) I frequently choose to reprint articles that I’ve read. I can’t see wasting my time reinventing the wheel when I read an informative, well-written article. The author here is Dan Holohan and the article appeared in the October 2010 issue of *PHC Plumbing + Hydronic Contractor News*. Visit Dan’s website at HeatingHelp.com.

My father worked for a wholesaler in New York City and then as a rep here on the Isle of Long. I went to work as his assistant in 1970, and that’s when I became convinced that everyone in America had hydronic heat. I was surprised to learn that some of it was fired by gas rather than oil. That was different from the way it was in my little neighborhood, but so be it.

We sold steam and hot water equipment, and I fell in love with all of it. There was a wonderful history to it; that history grabbed me with two sweet arms and held me. I loved the boilers, the pumps, the steam traps, the air vents, all the old and the new. I couldn’t get enough of it.

I lived that way for 19 years—consumed by the hydronics—and then I started this little company of ours and went out on the road to see the rest of America. I traveled New England and Pennsylvania and found what I knew and loved. I found it in most of the older cities of America, but when I traveled through the rest of the country—and it is a big country—I began to realize that there were furnaces in America and not much oil heat beyond the Northeast. I wondered about this, and I asked a lot of questions of the folks that I met. I began to look at the

statistics in the U.S. Census. What I learned was that hydronics plays but a tiny role in American heating. Someone told me it was about eight percent of the total—crumbs.

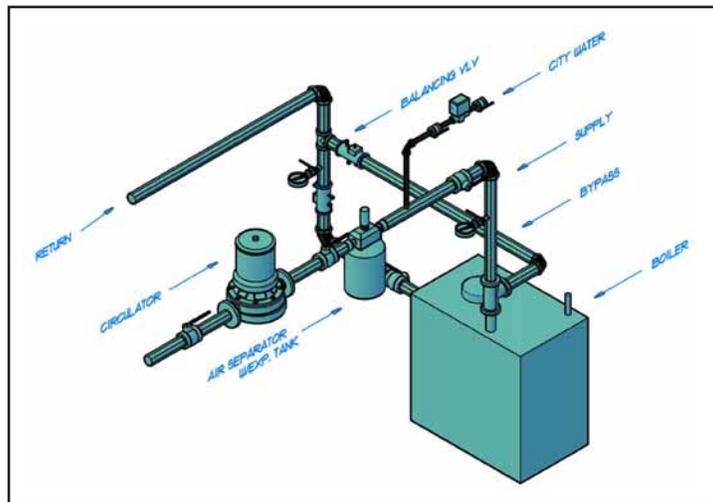
I could not understand this because I believed that hydronics offers superb comfort. I had grown up with steam (in NYC) and hot water (on Long Island). We had no central air-conditioning or even window air-conditioners. We had a floor fan. We also had drafty houses and oversized boilers and radiators. We had parents who smoked several packs a day and lousy indoor air quality; that was just the way it was. It was normal.

Working for a rep that sold hydronic equipment, I saw furnaces as my enemy. When I started writing, I gleefully used the term “scorched air” in my columns and books, and that term caught on. I don’t use it any more, because the furnace people have come a long way, and I’ve learned a bit. Not so bad.

I held out hope for a long time, though. I smiled at the seeming resurgence of the radiant-heating industry when it popped back up 20 years ago. This is it! I said. I traveled to the big ISH show in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1991 and saw plenty of radiant. I believed that the whole world was going that way. I talked it up, I wrote a book about it and I waited.

But it really never happened. Sure, people bought radiant for their high-end homes, but it wasn’t the revolution for which I had hoped. Before long, radiant became mainstream as contractors learned more about how it worked. Pex pipe became a commodity, like copper, and it lost its buzz.

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Stick To Your Fitness Resolutions

Remember your New Year's resolution to get fit? You're back to chowing down brownies and you've only gone to the gym a couple of times. Don't be too hard on yourself, but don't give up on the diet and exercise regiment either. Try again, and this time consider the following tips:

- 1) **Be realistic.** If you're trying to lose weight, set your sights on losing no more than a pound or two a week. Don't try to lose it all in a month. Also, know that you're human and prone to setbacks. Don't let a failure to stick to a plan derail you from picking up and trying again.
- 2) **Be specific.** Don't say you'll exercise more. Instead, commit to walking 30 minutes during your lunch break three days a week. Whenever possible, take the stairs; it's free exercise, and every little bit helps.
- 3) **Find a buddy.** It's almost always easier to get any goal accomplished if you have a partner who's trying to accomplish the same thing.
- 4) **Log your progress.** Writing down how much you've walked in the past week gives you a sense of accomplishment—and the encouragement to keep going. Also, it helps you to spot any trouble spots before they impede your overall progress.



Get Rid Of Self-Doubt

As you move into a new position or take on a challenging project, the voice of self-doubt can be loud. How do you quell your doubts? Try this plan:

- **Step 1:** Write down the negative thoughts. Simply list the doubts that plague your mind as you push into new territory.
- **Step 2:** Change each negative into a positive statement. Sometimes your own gut will fight this step, but do it anyway. For example, change the statement "I'm way out of my league on this project" to "I can learn the skills I'll need to complete this project."
- **Step 3:** Get perspective. Don't let the challenge overwhelm you. Think of the successes you've already achieved, and remind yourself that you didn't let doubts stop you.

Money Alone Doesn't Cut It

What keeps employees working for your organization? Although competitive pay is essential, money alone isn't what retains people, even in the current economic downturn. The top motivators are:

- **Professional development.** Give people the opportunity to learn new skills. It's the No. 1 factor in keeping employees from jumping ship.
- **Coaching and feedback.** Managers tend to think that the top performers don't need help. However, they often benefit from feedback and guidance most. If they aren't receiving feedback, they'll likely believe that the company doesn't care about their career.
- **Good bosses.** You can offer every incentive under the sun, but the fact is people seldom leave jobs, they leave bosses.

Avoid Employee Boredom

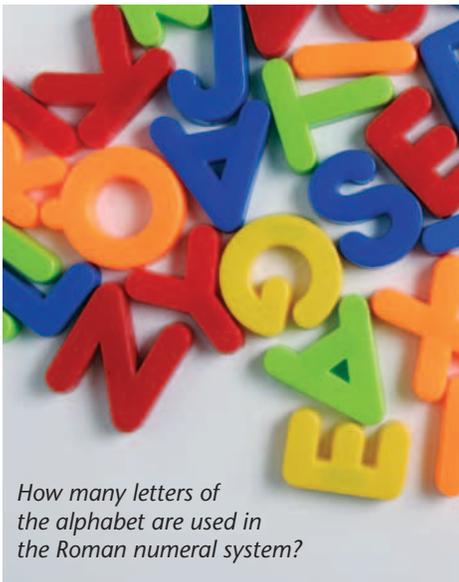
Some jobs are boring. That can make managing the people who do them a challenge, especially when those employees grew up with constant entertainment from TV and the Internet. How do you keep them engaged and motivated when they're counting the hours until they get to go home and do something fun?

- **Be honest.** Acknowledge up front that the work isn't very exciting, but explain why it's important. Don't just focus on the company's profits. Emphasize how their work helps other people—co-workers, customers, etc.
- **Give them goals.** Sometimes a target can make work more interesting. Challenge employees in different ways: To greet the most customers, assemble the most widgets, count the inventory more accurately, etc. Offer a small reward to make the game more enticing.
- **Look to the future.** Employees are more likely to stick with a job, even a boring one, if they see the possibility of moving into something better. Describe potential career paths, and tell your people what they need to do in order to move up.
- **Ask for feedback.** Encourage employees to suggest ideas for making their work more interesting or productive. Implementing their ideas will show that you value their opinions and take them seriously. They'll also be more invested in making their own suggestions succeed.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly





How many letters of the alphabet are used in the Roman numeral system?

Trivial Matters

- 1) What farm animal did Sarah Hale make famous in her 1830 poem?
 - a) pig
 - b) lamb
 - c) rooster
 - d) cow
- 2) How many letters of the alphabet are used in the Roman numeral system?
 - a) five
 - b) six
 - c) seven
 - d) eight
- 3) In the American version of Scrabble, the "K" is the only letter worth ____ points.
 - a) five
 - b) six
 - c) seven
 - d) nine
- 4) Which of these Greek mythological gods is typically pictured with trident in hand?
 - a) Poseidon
 - b) Zeus
 - c) Hermes
 - d) Apollo
- 5) In the past decade, approximately how much of the world's fish cultivation came from fish farms?
 - a) one-third
 - b) one-tenth
 - c) 2 percent
 - d) 0.05 percent

—from *mental_floss*

Answers: 1) b (The poem was "Mary Had A Little Lamb.") 2) c (I = 1, V = 5, X = 10, L = 50, C = 100, D = 500, M = 1,000.) 3) a (No tiles are worth 6, 7 or 9 points.) 4) a 5) a

Overcoming A Mistake

Some workplace mistakes are easy to correct; others can have a long-term impact on your career. When you sense that you've offended your boss, a colleague or an employee, ignoring the situation and hoping it will improve on its own can be disastrous. Take prompt action by following these guidelines:

- **Own up to the problem.** Admit that you've made a mistake. If you're not sure what you did wrong, ask. Apologize sincerely. Showing your willingness to admit your mistakes and learn from them will go a long way toward rebuilding those bridges.
- **Make amends.** Don't stop at just saying you're sorry. Do whatever you can to rectify your error, whether that means working overtime, redoing an assignment or explaining the situation to anyone who needs to know. Demonstrate that you take responsibility for your actions.
- **Ask for advice.** Talk to the people affected by your mistake and ask them what you can do to make things better—and what you should do next time. Don't get into arguments; listen to what they say, and do your best to follow their counsel.
- **Rebuild your relationships.** Consolidate your base of support with people who aren't angry with you. Tell them what happened and what you're doing about it. You'll need their trust and help as you move forward.
- **Be patient.** Don't expect to turn people's opinions around overnight. Accept the consequences of your mistakes, but maintain an upbeat, confident attitude that tells everyone you're not giving up. Making a mistake doesn't have to destroy your career—unless you let it.

Paws On The Job

If it feels like your office is going to the dogs, maybe it should. New research from Central Michigan University suggests that people who work on teams with a dog underfoot tend to trust one another more and work together better than those without a four-legged friend.

The results of the small study are preliminary, but they reinforce some companies' current practices: Amazon, Google, Kimpton Hotels, the Humane Society of the U.S., and even Replacements, Ltd.—which sells fine china, allow canines in their offices. The key, says Jennifer Fearing, co-author of *Dogs at Work*, is to set a few ground rules. At the Humane Society, pets must pass a six-week probation, and bathrooms, kitchens and some meeting rooms are dog-free zones.

"Employees' needs do come before the needs of the dogs," Fearing says.

—from *Parade*



Keep Your Productivity Up During Downtime

Most workplaces don't run at full speed all the time. Usually there's some downtime in between periods of high activity, and staying busy and productive between deadlines will show your commitment to the organization's health and values. Here are some ideas:

- **Clean the common areas.** The break room in most workplaces can usually stand to be cleaned and straightened. Look for other areas that don't usually get much attention. Volunteer to lead an office cleanup effort during slow periods.
- **Offer to help.** Check with your co-workers. They may need a hand with their own priorities, and pitching in to help will build your reputation as a team player.
- **Get ahead on your assignments.** Check your schedule to see what's coming up, and get a head start on future work. This will eliminate a last-minute rush and will free up your time for learning new skills.

The Future of Hydronics... *continued from page 1*

I thought these statistics were interesting: Fifty-one percent of the homes in the U.S. are in suburban areas, 29 percent are in central cities and only 20 percent are outside the metropolitan areas. The median age of American homes is 36 years—half are older; half are younger—and two-thirds of all American homes have furnaces. Twelve percent have electric heat pumps. Only 11 percent have a steam or hot water heating system.

After all these years of promoting hydronics in all its forms, American homeowners continue to say Ho-Hum and buy their furnaces. You know why? It's the air-conditioning. Hydronics is the path of most resistance because it calls for two systems. I know all the arguments by heart, but homeowners just don't buy them and neither do the builders.

So I'm watching the hydronic-equipment manufacturers as they lean further away from the residential market and move more toward the commercial market, and I think they're very smart to be doing this.

I'm watching the boilers that can heat a house, sure, but these new boilers can also link like freight cars with other boilers of the same type to meld into commercial systems that have remarkable turn-down ratios. These boilers remind me of how Google uses ordinary PCs (but tens of thousands of them, working together) to do amazing things. The modern-boiler people know what they're doing, and I think their eyes are on the commercial market and not the residential.

I'm watching the ECM¹ pumps arrive from every pump manufacturer, but I think the focus here is also on the commercial side because that's where the money is, and that's where these smart pumps make the most sense. This is a smart move.

I'm reading articles about how more and more people are storing data in the "cloud," that place in cyberspace where we

store our Google Docs and all the other things that live on servers. I'm watching social networking and how that's changing the way we deal with one another. I'm reading these articles, and they're telling me about how server facilities use a lot of energy but also give off a huge amount of heat. In some countries, that heat is flowing into district-heating systems that heat downtowns, railroad stations and even small homes. All of that heat is moving by way of pumps and control valves through pipes, and this is big stuff. This is hydronics.

I'm reading about large geothermal plants that are moving hot water and chilled water into district systems and that is hydronics.

I'm watching the world change, and it's happening fast. I've come to believe that the true future of hydronics is commercial. I think that the residential business will continue to be a profitable non-growth business, mainly one of replacement. I think that the trade will decide what gets replaced with what because the days of replacing like with like are over. Tradespeople are making that call these days, and if you are a manufacturer and you want to get this business, you had better get as close as you can to the trade. These folks buy from people they know and like. If you're out of touch with them, you're going to lose.

The future of hydronics is commercial.

¹What are electronically commutated (ECM) motors?: These are single-phase motors running off of a DC power signal (rectified, if running off of an AC power source) that use an electronic method of switching power to alternating coils around the rotor in order to induce a rotating magnetic field. They are much more efficient than traditional electro-mechanically commutated motors and also provide additional benefits on heat pump applications. (from jbarrownews.blogspot.com).



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