

Leading Off



Be a Proactive Mentor

Mentor is a word we use a lot. If you look it up, it means to advise or train someone, especially a younger colleague. I think the mentoring process is an important part of life because it allows us to pass life's lessons onto the younger generation. The older I get the more I think about this process of passing important information along. We should always be mindful of our attitudes, speech, and behavior because like the old saying, "Be careful what you say and do because little eyes are watching you." This is called good behavior. We should look beyond that and be a proactive mentor.

I have a couple of examples of proactive mentoring I want to tell you about. During my early years as a service tech I returned the core of a compressor to the local wholesaler. This older crusty gentleman, Olin Bradshaw, checked me in and asked me what caused the failure. I told him it was not a warranty compressor, but it was grounded. He told me it did not matter if it was warranty or not, something had caused it to fail, he pointed out, and he asked me if I knew how to determine the real cause of failure. I said, "no, sir." Mr. Bradshaw told me to follow him to the back; I thought this might be my last day on earth. He proceeded to show me how to remove the head, valve plate, and front bearing in order to narrow down the cause of failure.

That encounter started me on the track of analyzing why things fail, not just being a parts changer. Usually when I came into that wholesaler, Mr. Bradshaw would have some tidbits of knowledge for me and I had plenty of questions for him. He was mentoring me.

When it comes to teaching about compressors, two gentlemen, Garth Denison, CMS, and Wesley Taylor, CMS, have been developing material and training seminars for years. This has been a labor of love, sharing their knowledge through RSES and the HVACR industry. When I first sat in on their RSES training seminars, I had just reached the, "I know everything, and if you don't believe me, just ask me," stage in my career. It took less than 20 minutes to be dethroned and placed back in the "needs improvement" category. These gentlemen and so many others that I do not have the space to list are great mentors.

Those of us who should need to make a decision to be a proactive mentor. We need to develop a simple mentoring plan and look for younger colleagues to mentor. Part of my plan will be to identify one new young person in our industry each year and mentor them and pay their RSES dues for a year. I challenge you to do the same.

I still believe RSES Membership is a great value. A couple of weeks ago, Don Gillis did a webinar on Compressor Fundamentals, and this was a great learning session for all who attended. This was made possible because RSES is an active organization. This would not be possible without members like you. 

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