Don’t be Old School About New Technology

BY GARY MCCREADIE

Over the last few years operating my online project, “HVAC Know It All,” I have been heavily involved in online discussions on many platforms pertaining to HVAC and refrigeration. I have also been involved in testing many tools and products that are new or relatively new to the industry.

During this experience, I have come across many technicians, many of whom I would put into the “old school” category. They have resisted new methods, practices and products at a glance. I have also fallen victim to snap judgment. I have tried to force myself out of this mindset and instead implement research and testing as a guide rather than my opinion. Too often, our opinions are influenced by opinions of other technicians that relied on cliché responses.

I strongly encourage an open mind when encountering a new approach that’s not in your comfort zone. If all human beings chose the closed-minded approach, the world would not advance. One of my old instructors used to say, “read three books and ask three people before forming your own opinion.” What he was trying to reinforce is that we must get information from multiple sources. I would add, choose your sources wisely.

I receive weekly messages from apprentices that are eager to learn. A lot of them are frustrated about getting the cold shoulder from senior techs on job sites when asking about or explaining what they recently learned online. For example, digital manifolds and digital smart probes are a hot and polarizing topic. The digital age is upon us and the younger generations are intrigued and attracted to smart tools. The “old school” mentality naturally resists this progression. I’ve found in my experience, when the senior tech is not in the know, the idea is quickly dismissed.

Let’s take this approach instead: listen to the info from your apprentice or junior tech, but don’t blurt out a response that equates to “get off my lawn.” Humor them with a conversation that not only keeps them engaged but yourself too. If the topic revolves around their fancy new cordless vacuum pump, hold it, test it, read about it and watch videos on the topic. I guarantee that you will learn something. Perhaps it may spark excitement, especially if you have felt stale or at a standstill in your work.

If you are an owner or manager, promoting this approach becomes essential to your day-to-day operation. How do we attract younger technicians to continuously grow our business if your business doesn’t promote new ideas and allow younger techs to use the up-and-coming technology?

Another subject plaguing the industry, as well as many other blue-collar industries, is online communication. There have been certain platforms that have created a negative culture and it has built roadblocks to positive conversation. For instance, I give homage to the brave souls that post an image of their installations on some social media groups. In almost all cases, the job is ripped apart by those commenting.

I believe in quality work, but we, as a community, need to relay bad news in a constructive manner. We also need to take into account that codes are different across the globe and potentially, geographically speaking, may not exist in certain places. We need respectful responses on how to improve, even if one’s ego gets slightly bruised.

How do we generate a respectful response? We need to ask questions, not assume. When you assume, you make an ASS out of U and ME. Once you know and understand about a job a fellow tech has posted online, then you can make useful comments.

This all comes down to marketing the trade in a positive manner, especially to those potential candidates that we are in desperate need of recruiting. The world changes and along with it HVACR. Let’s keep an open mind, positive intentions and grow and maintain a culture of non-assuming professionals that are constantly learning. Happy HVACing!

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Troubleshooting Answer

The correct diagnosis based on the measurements is an open high-pressure switch. If the high-pressure switch was closed, then there would be no voltage measured between all the points tested because the points would be equal in potential. The meter should be connected with one leg on the L2 or common side of the load if the technician wants to “walk” through the circuit and find where voltage is lost.