

Your Company's Front Line Representative First Published Transmitter News 11/21/07

The installation technician is your company's representative to the customer so before you send them to the job site ask your self this question "would I want this person doing work in my house?"

As phone and internet transactions increase, the installation technician is the only person that the customer will see during the entire transaction. This person will be in the customer's home for anywhere from an hour to all day depending on the job. So it is critical that they have the skills, both people and professional, to complete the job successfully.

One of the most important items that any professional satellite retailer should be doing is ensuring that all of their technicians (employee and contractor) are properly trained. Unfortunately, this is the area that many retailers and installation contractors fail to invest enough time and money into. Failure to use properly trained technicians will result in lost referrals, service calls, charge backs and a poor reputation for your company. In addition if you have not provided adequate training you are liable to have the technician quit as they become frustrated trying to meet the demands of the installation and the customer. I have met with many organizations that only provide minimal training before sending a tech out in the field; these firms also have much higher turn over than their counterparts. Technician turn over in this industry could be reduced if there was more effort spent on training both initial and continuing education.

One of the challenges that most organizations have with providing adequate training is time. Due to the high volume of installation, service and upgrades there is a constant demand to get the technicians in the field as fast as possible. Training takes time and it is difficult to balance this against the constant need to get the job done. If you push someone into the field too fast you run the risk that they will not have the skills or knowledge to get the job done to the standards you desire. If you have experienced techs there is always reluctance to take them out of the field for continuing education training as you lose their productivity for the day. In addition taking a technician out of the field for a day or more affects short term productivity. However, failure to provide your technicians with the proper skills will negatively affect your business. Given these challenges, it is up to you the professional satellite retailer, to ensure your personnel are properly trained.

Did you know that there are plenty of free training programs available to you and your technicians? Check the retail web site of your platform provider and you will find loads of free training material. There are videos, tech memos, instruction guides and other resources available to you and your technicians. At a recent meeting less than 30 of the 70 attendees knew that there was installation training available to them through their retailer web site. Yes the retailer web site is important to check from sales and marketing information, it is also essential that you use it to check your commissions; however, if you're not using the available technical training resources then you are not taking full advantage of the information.

There are also a number of organizations which offer training classes for a fee. These classes tend to be smaller and offer more hands on or technical information than is available for free. Depending on the scope of work and needs of your organization, these seminars may provide a good value for your organization. You can frequently find these classes being conducted at trade shows and events. It may also be possible to schedule one of these sessions at your location. Distributors and manufacturers will frequently travel to your location to conduct training, so don't be afraid to ask.

In addition you need to develop some form of assessment to ensure that your techs understand what is expected of them. SBCA, Wild Blue, CEDIA and other organizations all have national certification programs. These programs are designed to provide the employer with confidence

that their technicians have the necessary skills to perform the work assigned to them, in addition they give the customer confidence that the employer is using qualified personnel.

The needs of your organization will determine what type of training your technicians need. These may involve class room, hands on and internet learning methods. I would recommend that you develop a training program that involves all of these and use your veteran technicians mentor the new ones. Take advantage of the substantial training resources available from the platform providers, distributors, manufacturers and other organizations. Lastly consider training as an investment in your company not unlike advertising. A properly trained technician will be more productive, create fewer service calls and provide better customer service which will ultimately make your company more profitable.

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