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OPINION



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Where Do You Think the HVAC Puck is Going to Be?

For this job, I attend a lot of association and manufacturer events. That means listening to a bunch of keynote speakers and breakout sessions. Obviously, some are better than others, but, to be honest, a lot of them begin to run together.

However, every now and again you hear something at these events that really resonates. This happened recently when I attended the Evapco Global Sales Conference in Baltimore. Evapco President and CEO, Bill Bartley, was on stage explaining why his company was getting involved in the dry side of the HVAC business after building the company by focusing on the wet side.

Bartley related his company to NHL's great Wayne Gretzky. When Gretzky was asked in an interview why he was so good, the Hall of Famer stated that he skated to where the puck was "going" to be rather than where the puck was at the time.

I was able to talk with Bart-

ley after the event, and he further explained the process of making such a dramatic switch of a business model. While it still will be involved in the wet side, Evapco saw the HVAC landscape changing and realized the company needed to change with it. Bartley was especially happy that Evapco's reps will now have a complete spectrum of products to offer customers.

This was not a quick process for Bartley and the leadership at Evapco. Instead, this transition was eight years in the making. They purchased a small Denmark company in 2009 to start the process. Now, more than a few years later, they feel confident enough to globalize this decision.

As an HVAC contractor, you should be going through the same process with your company. Now, I am not suggesting that you purchase a company from a small, Northern European country. Nor am I suggesting that you wait eight years to bring your change to market. Your com-

pany and business practices are a lot different than that a major, global manufacturer like Evapco.

What I am suggesting is for contractors to look at their business and what they are offering, and decide if they need to branch out. I know a lot of HVAC contractors did this during the economic downturn a few years back. It was merely for survival as companies saw a great decrease in business and needed to make it up somewhere.

Now that the economy is in a better place, it does not mean that looking to branch out is a thing of the past. Completely opposite of what Evapco is doing, I have heard from a lot of contractors that have begun to get into the wet side of the business. And in talking with contracting legend Larry Taylor recently at Service World Expo, he still sees a great opportunity in the home-performance contracting field. Taylor was actually surprised and somewhat disappointed that part of the industry has not seen

more growth in recent years.

While those are two parts of the HVAC industry that are worth taking a look at, it is up to the individual contractors to decide what is right for their market. And much like Gretzky, you should not necessarily be looking at what your market is demanding this week or even next month. Skate to where the puck is going to be. Maybe your market is primed to see great growth in the ductless technology, and that is where your company should be investing. Or perhaps your market sees a plethora of homeowners who have high incomes, worry about energy efficiency, and enjoy technology. Your business should be looking into geothermal to see if it is right for your company and customers. Contractors should know their market and their business. Do your research and make an educated decision.

Skate to where the puck is going to be, and you will score a lot more goals than your competition. **N**