



There's a saying that you may have heard: "You don't know what you have not learned." Well, if this is true, then so is the saying, "You can't feel what you have not felt."

In most parts of the cold climate world, people have experienced the comfort and benefits of hydronic heating, but in the forced air world of North America, this is not the case. It is our challenge to help our customers feel what they have yet to experience – the comfort of hydronics, and more specifically, radiant floor heating. And it would be beneficial if our efforts to this end were uniform and targeted.

There is a good reason radiant floor product manufacturers spend big marketing bucks on consumer magazines, home shows and other media targeting homeowners. They realize their products, and our comfort proposal, is a pull-through situation. Often the purchase of a hydronic system is initiated by the homeowner in spite of builder and renovation contractor reluctance to deviate from the forced air norm.

As we dialogue with our prospective customer and paint word pictures of system benefits, let's not forget to highlight all aspects of a properly designed and installed system. If our industry is going to grow our market share, we need to address our customer's comfort level (see sidebar). They have a certain comfort zone with the box in the basement and ducts. It has its faults, but it is the devil they know.

And one more step towards building the comfort level with hydronic systems is to build systems that are not intimidating. Let's not just take the scary basement boiler monsters from the floor and create new shiny wall-mounted monsters. We need to work towards simplified, standardized systems that are less visually intimidating for the owner/operators and take the "scare factor" out.

When we have done this, our customers can move from their forced air world to the new hydronic world and be in a new comfort zone, both physically and mentally.

Selling Hydronics *in a forced air world*

Comfort comes in many forms when talking hydronics:

- **Sound levels:** New high-efficiency furnaces move a great amount of air and can create a sound level complaint. High-efficiency mod-con boilers just hum along quietly and are not normally audible, except when standing next to them. With proper air elimination the distribution system should be almost silent.

- **Bulkhead reduction:** It is not very comfortable banging your head on low-hanging boxed-in basement duct work. Tell the great story of the small diameter tube in the joist and your customers can stop doing the basement head bob.

- **Concentrated BTU movement:** A great benefit of using water as our transfer medium is the amount of heat we can easily move to a new home addition. The 3/4" pipe we use is less obstructive than the 8" by 14" duct. I call it "BTU bundling."

- **Vertical comfort zoning:** Most of our customers have experienced the effect of a cold basement, relatively comfortable main floor and over-warm upper floors that many forced air (and older hydronic) homes deliver. With zoning control by each floor, tell your customers they can dial in the desired room temperature regardless of conditions in other zones of their home.

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