

Building Envelope News

ZERODRAFT your way to increased profits
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY SPECIAL



Vic Aleshire credits ZERODRAFT products and contractor training with contributing to the success of his Ohio-based Comfort Company, which has grown quickly over the past few years.

Vic Aleshire and the Comfort Company ZERODRAFT their way to Success

When Vic Aleshire started the Comfort Company he had seven customers. Now he averages between 150 and 200 fall tune-ups for heating systems and about 200 to 250 whole house inspections annually – blower-door inspections, heat load calculations, air sealing and insulation diagnostics.

Vic is a Zerodraft Contractor, and he is very, very busy.

BEN “We’ve gone from one two-person crew to three crews, with a fourth on-call. We must be doing something right.”

If customer referrals are anything to judge by, the Comfort Company is doing almost everything right. One customer gave them 15 referrals last year alone. In fact, they take their name from a customer who kept urging people to “Talk to those comfort guys - they’ll put you right.”

He credits a lot of his success in producing happy customers to the quality of Zerodraft products.

“The performance of Zerodraft products is great, especially the two-component foam,” he says. “It keeps my customers satisfied and it keeps me competitive.”

Vic knows he can also rely on the durability of the Zerodraft weather stripping and door sweeps.

“The weather stripping product is the best by far that I’ve found. I have not been back on any job for a strip failure, and we’ve been installing the product for five years.”

He says he has so much confidence in the Zerodraft product line because, “they’ve been created specifically for the work we do. They’re durable and environmentally safe. The last thing you want to do is install something toxic in someone’s house. These products do not create a new problem in the home.”

As well as the air sealing and insulation work, the ‘comfort’ team also installs high-efficiency 90% plus gas units (forced air systems), high-efficiency air conditioners and heat pump systems.

“We’ve been trying to get out of the heating and air conditioning business because furnaces break down on Christmas Eve, but insulation and air sealing do not,” he says. “Besides, you can’t put a high efficiency furnace in a house when the envelope is only 50 per cent efficient. You have to bring the house up to the same level.”



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ZERODRAFT your way to increased profits



Welcome to this special issue of Building Envelope News. We are delighted to share with you details about what promises to be the biggest business opportunity in the history of the North American weatherization industry. Read on. Call us at 1-877-272-2626, visit us at Affordable Comfort Cincinnati or go to www.zerodraft.com.

Who is this business opportunity for?

Entrepreneurs who have already started selling ZERODRAFT services — and are using ZERODRAFT products — include many different kinds of small and medium-sized companies. They have mostly been involved in some kind of contracting business such as insulation, renovation, heating and air conditioning, energy conservation, or even roofing, siding or windows. Some of them have just worked in the consumer/residential field. Others already have experience selling to the commercial, industrial and institutional or public sector market.

Who’s already in the business?

In the last three years, several contracting firms have joined forces with ZERODRAFT to expand their business. Some of the ‘weatherization’ contractors have started to use the ZERODRAFT line exclusively on their residential projects; some have acted as sub-contractors for major projects won by the Canam contracting group. Others have developed the expertise, with help from

ZERODRAFT trainers, to go out and sell major commercial contracts.

Who will you compete against?

This is a major point of difference with ZERODRAFT. Once you have trained as a ZERODRAFT Building Envelope Improvement Contractor, you will almost never find yourself competing with similarly equipped companies. You will, however, compete with those who continue to offer ‘half-solutions’ that take traditional approaches to comfort problems and fail to deliver customer satisfaction. Here you will have the opportunity to educate your customer and show them how others have solved similar problems or improved their home or building using the ZERODRAFT approach.

Sometimes your greatest competition will simply be ignorance: your customers will not know that your service is the answer to their needs. Again, ZERODRAFT will provide you with all the marketing support materials you need to show them otherwise.

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We found that by doing both, we can offer a package that no one around here can beat.”

Vic believes in looking at the entire structure and how all the details work together, something he learned during his Zerodraft Contractor training.

“It was some of the most intense training I’ve ever had to go through. There were many houses we visited after the training and went up into the attics, found problems and sealed the attics to save the roofs and create a safer environment for our customers.”

He believes Zerodraft’s Contractor Training Program is a very valuable asset.

“If anyone is interested in being an air sealer, you need to start with this training. It will give you every bit of knowledge you need to go the work,” he says. “Be prepared. Go in with an open mind and be ready to work.”

One customer’s air conditioning bill was reduced by 50% to \$200 a month after the Comfort Company air sealed the house and installed a proper ceiling.

The support Zerodraft gives its contractors does not stop with products and training. Vic says he receives many sub-contracting jobs through his affiliation with Zerodraft and its parent company, Canam Building Envelope Specialists Inc.

The Comfort Company works in residential, light commercial and institutional environments. For residential customers, health and safety issues are a prime concern.

“We end up getting called in on a lot on comfort issues, when people have rooms in their home that won’t heat. We get called in a lot for carbon monoxide problems, where the detectors are going off. We go in and find out what’s causing the problem and where it’s coming from,” he says. “We’re starting to

do more and more mold mitigation. We go into houses just totally infested with mold, which is a direct result of air leakage.”

He also had a large volume of calls this past summer because of a ladybug infestation in the area.

“We get quite a few bug calls. Americans are great about bugs. Bugs and bats,” he laughs.

The Comfort Company starts home calls by setting up a blower door



The Comfort Company prevents ice-damming problems like this with a comprehensive attic sealing package.

inside the house to pinpoint all the air leaks. They then seal major leaks and work down to the little ones. Often, he says, he will get a call right after project completion, complaining that the thermostat is inaccurate.

“I always keep it on 72, and now it’s too hot,’ they’ll say. I have to explain that we didn’t touch the thermostat, and the difference is in the air seal. Or they’ll be confused about their utility bill going down so drastically. People don’t believe that kind of thing can happen just by doing air sealing and insulation work,” he says. “We don’t go out and sell energy efficiency. We make the buildings more durable. The by-product of making a building durable and safe is energy conservation. And we’re happy it happens, because it justifies the retrofit.”

Vic likes to tell the story of one ‘ice-damming’ customer who waited too long to call. A 20-foot long icicle, measuring almost 2.5 feet in diameter, fell on the man’s BMW and completely crushed its roof. Vic points out that it was lucky the car took the brunt because an icicle that big could kill a person easily. The cause of the problem was a 12 x 12-inch chase way running from top to

bottom in the house. It had been melting snow on the roof, which had about 14 inches on it at the time.

When the icicle fell, it took the gutters and part of the eaves off the house. The total damage? \$48,000 to the car and approximately \$20,000 worth of damage to the house.

“Those are the calls you get,” he says. “People are irate. They want the problem fixed.”

One customer’s air conditioning bill was reduced by 50% to \$200 a month after the Comfort Company air sealed the house and installed a proper ceiling. Another had his average monthly heating bill cut in half to \$100 after holes in the attic were sealed and new insulation was installed by the Comfort Company.

Although most of its work is in the residential market, the Comfort Company is finding more light



This garage door was coated with ZERODRAFT spray foam and is now an R-14 as well as being sealed. Vic reports this significantly changed the structure according to the owner.

commercial work. Vic says sometimes it is difficult to convince some building managers of the value of air sealing. One manager reportedly spent about \$20,000 a year repairing one side of his building, apparently because the wall leaked when it rained in the early spring. But the problem was on the north side of the building,

and Ohio weather comes from the southwest.

“We found a 16-foot long by 4 foot tall by 3 foot thick piece of ice inside that wall. Well, there’s your flooding!”

He says that standing outside the building and looking up, he could see the efflorescence from where the moisture had worked through.

“We sealed the north and west walls of that building, because that’s all the manager wanted done. He didn’t believe it would work. The next month they got their utility bill and we got a contract to do the rest of the building.”

Vic particularly likes working on institutional projects like schools.

“The school systems are some of the neatest projects. Here in Ohio, we’re looking at buildings that were built in the 1920s and 30s, and more that were built in the 60s and 70s,” he says. “We’ve got a lot of bad windows. We’ve got a lot of faulty roof-wall joints, and doors we’re trying to keep on the hinges. You have to be creative and sometimes find techniques of your own to get back into areas to seal them up.”

He wants to provide a safe, comfortable environment for learning.

“We’re looking at tomorrow. We’re not looking at today. The kids are tomorrow’s leaders. They’re going to be tomorrow’s people making decisions. What if they were in an environment that made them ill? We don’t want mold in our classrooms.”

One particular incident he recalls was the time he was called in to fix the windows on one side of a school – after an 18-inch snowdrift formed overnight in one of the classrooms.

“I had been badgering the maintenance guy in that school for about a year,” he says. “The biggest challenge is educating the customer. They have to realize they need your service.”

Vic works hard to spread the word on the value of air sealing. He does education sessions for contractors and building inspectors in Ohio six times a year. Last year over 3,000 contractors attended his sessions.



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What services will you be providing?

Wherever you sell ZERODRAFT, your customers can expect your service to contribute to the improved health, safety, desirability and energy efficiency of their building.

Residential – Consumer

Comfort problems, such as cold rooms above garages and bedrooms that you can never get warm, especially in basements, are the most common. Problems such as ice-damming, mold, mildew, condensation and wet attics are very common. ZERODRAFT has cost-effective air sealing and insulation solutions to all of these and more. Your sales kit will give you all the tools you need to show prospects how you can deliver results.

Industrial, Commercial, Institutional

The building envelope improvements are often the same as with single-family residential, just on a bigger scale. Air barrier systems in these big buildings are rarely continuous, which they have to be if they are to function properly. The ZERODRAFT opportunity is making the air barrier system continuous. ZERODRAFT materials are used to make this possible just about everywhere one building component meets another building component...from the penthouse mechanical room down through the garbage chutes, fire doors, stairwells, service penetrations all the way to the ground level and parking garage doors. One of the major problems to be addressed is stack effect. Reducing this effect by air sealing also benefits fire safety.

Who is buying these products and services?

Residential – Consumers

In the single family home sector, financially better off consumers can afford to spend more money on solving comfort problems or insuring that they maintain their home's resale value. They tend to own more expensive homes in upscale neighborhoods.

Industrial, Commercial, Institutional

In these markets, there are several different groups of buyers. Owners of buildings are usually the most willing to spend money for reasons such as retaining tenants, providing comfort conditions for employees, and stopping deterioration. On smaller projects, you will possibly deal directly with the owner. Other titles you will have to get to know include plant manager, building, property or facility manager, superintendent, director of operations or maintenance. In the condominium sector you may deal directly with the Board of Directors or its hired representative.



Property management companies that look after buildings for the owners are responsible for many decisions, particularly in multi-family housing, office, medical, retail and entertainment facilities.

One important group are the energy service companies, sometimes known as ESCOs. They sell building upgrade services mostly in the institutional and public sector for educational, military, government and medical facilities. They are rewarded on the basis of building performance, typically getting a share of energy cost reductions. The majority of these companies agree that building envelope improvements are a way to insure that mechanical improvements to the building can deliver savings more effectively.

Of course, they also provide the building owner with highly desirable, although intangible, occupant comfort benefits.

What products will you be using?

ZERODRAFT has a complete range of materials and components to air seal, draft proof and insulate every conceivable crack, gap, leak and hole in every type of building. Each material solution has been carefully engineered for performance and durability in its intended application. For an overview, visit www.ZERODRAFT.com or call 1-877-272-2626 for your own binder.

Where can you operate a ZERODRAFT business?

Anywhere in North America, and very soon we hope, in Europe and South America. This is a very new opportunity and there are many regions that are desperately in need of the ZERODRAFT service.

Will you have to train workers?

Yes. ZERODRAFT products comply with UL installation standards. These require trained and 'qualified' workers. ZERODRAFT training programs will quickly bring your crews up to the required standard for certification.

Where can you learn more about the comfort contracting business?

ZERODRAFT has training courses available on an ongoing basis for new and established contractors wishing to learn about new markets and new applications. These are generally held near Toronto International Airport, Canada. There is no fee charged, but you are responsible for your own travel and accommodation expenses.

Where are the fastest growing markets?

Both cold and warm climate areas of North America need building envelope improvement services. The problems are different, but the solutions are very similar. Although knowledge of the ZERODRAFT approach is greater in northern,

colder climates, your competition will be less in areas where the connection between continuous air barrier systems and the comfort/energy efficiency benefits is not well known.

Why is this opportunity different?

Probably because it takes a certain level of entrepreneurship to go into a market where you are the first in. You will not always be talking to prospects who know your product, know why or how it works or even that there really is a solution to their building problem.

Why has demand grown?

Many of the building envelope improvements that ZERODRAFT materials deliver have their roots in the history of energy conservation and energy efficiency. In the late 1970s North America made its first attempt to reduce energy consumption. ZERODRAFT products help buildings use less energy and reduce energy costs for the owner.

Although energy prices have increased in the last twenty years, we still have cheap energy compared with the rest of the world. Building owners are not usually willing to spend their money simply to get a payback in lower costs. They need a 'must-do' reason. ZERODRAFT has found that these are usually tenant complaints about comfort, deteriorating structure, or litigation risk from building decay causing injury.

How will you generate business?

ZERODRAFT will provide you with sales materials, but you will need to get these into the hands and minds of people who can spend money. Our marketing team shares success stories with everyone in the ZERODRAFT network. You will not only have information about who has bought what and why, but also the marketing and sales activities that generated the opportunities.

If you can demonstrate to our parent company, Canam, that your installation crews are proficient with ZERODRAFT materials, you

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automatically get on the list of potential sub-contractors for the major renovation projects currently being won across the continent.

**How do you sell
ZERODRAFT services?**

Our head office team has perfected sales techniques that work in the field, with both residential consumers and the commercial, industrial, institutional prospect. When you attend training, you will be able to question our top sales executives in detail for tips about what gets the customer to sign.

**How profitable can
you be?**

ZERODRAFT materials are a premium brand. The value that an experienced contractor adds, however, is so great that typical margins are considerably in excess of most conventional trades such as insulation, where competition with similar contractors is intense. Your unique problem solving service will in most cases lead to a sole supplier negotiated price.

Who is ZERODRAFT?

ZERODRAFT is the name of the air barrier materials and components division of its parent company Canam Building Envelope Specialists Inc. ZERODRAFT has been in existence for nearly ten years. During that time it has

developed a full range of field-proven air leakage control products that meet the demanding specifications of Canam, a contracting and consulting company with 25 years in the building envelope improvement business.

Who is Canam?

Canam Building Envelope Specialists is probably North America's leading building envelope contracting company. Although it built its experience in the field, ZERODRAFT's parent company is held in high regard by the world's leading authorities in building science, research, structural engineering and architecture. Canam principals are often consulted by these disciplines to analyze building problems and to recommend solutions. ⚙

**Vic
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Among the converted are local Energy Service Companies (ESCOs). With the Zerodraft name behind him, Vic says he has established strong ties.

"Zerodraft is a big part of winning the bid, because it means we offer something that nobody else can offer to our ESCOs, and that's air sealing. We stand behind it so well, that they come looking for us in order to make sure they get the bids," he says.

All in all, Vic is happy with life as a Zerodraft Contractor.

"I really would like to see more people doing this. Honestly, the market is big enough. Not too many more, though," he laughs.

"We're using more and more foam product, along with door and window weather stripping. There's nothing set in stone about how to develop your market for this. All you have to do is develop your own niche and go for it." ⚙

**How do you
get started?**

Call 1-877-272-2626 immediately. Ask for Steve Tratt or Tony Woods. Get ready to visit Toronto for your training course and start ZERODRAFTing your way to increased profits.

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