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Promote radiant heating - It's time to burst the hot air balloon

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WE ALL KNOW that radiant floor heating is not a new concept.

It began 2,000 years ago when the Romans found they could channel the hot flue gases from wood fires under their floors, made of stone, and heat their homes and baths. Imagine what they would have done if they had boilers, pumps and electricity. We do have these modern, efficient heat sources available and the means to create comfortable radiant-heated floors and walls.

The domestic heating market is dominated by hot air. The latest statistics show that 93% of the market is hot air, with the remaining 7% shared by hydronic and electric heat. There is plenty of room for growth in the hydronics industry with more than enough reasons to convince customers that hot water heating is more comfortable and economical.

I must admit that until this winter I have always been comfortable at home and in my office. Having lived for the past 15 years with floor heating in both locales, my family, co-workers and myself had not experienced the discomfort of a hot air system. That all changed when we moved the company into a new building that was heated by hot air.

Since it was the middle of the winter, we decided to not disturb what was in place. The experience has been enlightening. Coping with the cold drafts under our desks while the blowers were blasting our heads with hot air was not a pleasant experience.

Nobody was able to get comfortable. We seemed to be going from one hot air blast to another, and from one cooling down cycle to another, waiting for the blower to kick in again, alternating between roasting cycles when our ears and cheeks turned pink, and chilling periods when we were ready to start a bonfire.

Our office manager loves the spaciousness of the new facility and all the amenities that our new building offers, but there were many days during February and March when she would have given it all up for her small floor-heated office in the old building.

This uncomfortable feeling is prevalent in all hot air systems. Think of the last time you stayed in a hotel room with those blower units, or you were in those big warehouse stores. You hear people joking about the freight train sitting in their basement or attic. People complain about dry sinuses, dry skin, dust and poor air quality when they say to me that they would love to have tile in their

homes, but the floors would just be too cold!

Hydronic heating, especially radiant floor and wall heating, can make these people's lives more comfortable. It is up to us in the hydronics industry to show them the viable alternatives. Many architects and engineers are specifying hydronic radiant heating for expensive homes and larger buildings. Builders and developers are seriously looking into and accepting hydronics as a viable form of heating their buildings.

The market is there. It's up to us to expand it. In following articles I will share my 18 years of radiant heating experience on installation technique "do's" and "don'ts" with you. It's time to get hydronics off the ground and burst that hot air balloon.

As for our company, we are now very happy that we have our air conditioning, but between now and next fall we will be working on the new floor-heating installation (or I fear a revolt)!

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