

Duct & Vent Cleaning of America Celebrates 20 Years in Business



Duct & Vent Cleaning of America's fleet of trucks has grown considerably since the company's start 20 years ago.

NADCA isn't the only organization in the HVAC Inspection, Maintenance and Restoration industry celebrating its 20-year anniversary in 2009. Duct & Vent Cleaning of America, headquartered in Springfield, Massachusetts, has been going strong for 20 years, and is the subject of this issue's Member Profile.

Duct & Vent Cleaning of America was founded by Michael Vinick, a member of NADCA's Board of Directors, and his business partner, Ron Eckman. Eckman was originally in the carpet cleaning and maintenance supply business, but noticed a growing number of customers were inquiring about duct cleaning services. Recognizing this emerging market, Duct & Vent Cleaning of America entered the HVAC cleaning industry, and joined NADCA in February 1990.

Vinick said the company decided to join NADCA because he has always felt it is important to have a global perspective and to be part of something greater than yourself. "I have been fortunate to be involved with NADCA from the beginning. I have also made many good friends over the years as a result of the association. I am now fortunate to be on the Board of Directors," said Vinick.

Currently, Duct & Vent performs services for commercial clients, including industrial, institutional, municipal, state, and federal customers—in addition to cleaning residential ductwork. The company's clients break down to approximately 90 percent commercial

and 10 percent residential jobs. The company manages and performs work throughout the U.S., but the majority of Duct & Vent's clients are located in the Mid-Atlantic North and New England.

Question & Answer with Michael Vinick

What were some of the biggest challenges during the early years?

I think that the biggest challenge—besides making payroll—was educating the consumer about the benefits of duct cleaning. Gaining acceptance by the mechanical contractors was a large hurdle to overcome. The regular 80-hour work weeks weren't the easiest either.

What types of services were provided by the company at start-up and during the early years?

Our services have only changed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the duct cleaning services that we perform. By this I mean that we are a more consulatory vendor to our end user. We provide a more in-depth array of services associated with duct cleaning. A few examples of this are drain pan refurbishment and interior re-insulation services.

Can you think of any particular milestones for the company, or notable accomplishments?

I knew that this business was going to succeed during the spring of 1994, when I drove two trucks down a pier to perform work aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Eagle. The ship was commandeered by the United States Navy from Hitler during World War II. It was a very good day! There have been many other great milestones and memories to look back upon.

What are some of the company's biggest challenges today?

Besides a difficult economy, the biggest challenge that we encounter is and always will be staffing. Not everyone wakes up every day with the drive and determination to perform to their highest level. It is our job as managers to lead the organizations team to peak performance.

5) What's the best piece of advice you've received for building a successful business?

“Never give up and never give in.” To be fair and always take the high road! To be honest in everything that you do!

What is your worst project horror story (the project you would most like to forget)?

There are none because when something is at that point, you can learn more about yourself and what to do better next time than at any other time in business.

What is the coolest project you’ve done?

There are so many that it would be difficult to determine the one that stands out the most as being the “coolest.” I hope all of them are cool when the air conditioning is turned back on!

Do you have problems with low-quality service providers in your area? How do you deal with this issue?

Like anything else, there are obstacles with low-quality service providers. We do our best to educate the customer and give them an informed choice. There will always be “tire kickers” and people that will purchase “price.” When you purchase a product and two products that are lined up are exactly alike you would be foolish to take the higher priced one. But with a service, you are purchasing the quality and value of the people performing the work. By sharing expectations and following through, you should be able to win over the customers that you want.

NADCA has grown tremendously and has set many standards since its start in 1989. How would you like to see NADCA grow over the next 10 years?

I would like to see us even more universally accepted by our industry peers to ensure that our Association is the go-to place for duct cleaning and the inspection, maintenance and restoration of ductwork.

Commercially, our services are now listed in the specifications of most construction and renovation projects. That was not the situation even 10 years ago. Now we must get the specifications to the point of demanding NADCA members as the required on-site service provider and standard of choice.

Residentially, our efforts will be tougher. With continued public relations and the acceptance of our association by the HVAC contractors that service the residential marketplace, we can become the go-to service providers in the residential marketplace.

We can not expect the average consumer to know what NADCA is—we must bring it to them from another direction. ●