

HVAC&R Nation

AN AIRAH PUBLICATION



Feature

The A to Z of
controls and
instruments



**11 ways
to be a better fridgie**

Skills

WORKSHOP

Reciprocating
compressors



Aaron McConnell says answers to problems aren't always easily available.

11 WAYS TO BE A BETTER FRIDGIE

Ours is an industry that is forever evolving, and as a fridgie working in this space you should be evolving too. With the help of industry members, HVAC&R Nation's **Sean McGowan** has compiled 11 ways you can become a better fridgie.

TIP #1

CONTINUALLY UPDATE YOUR SKILLS

The HVAC&R industry is large, diverse and always changing. Getting to the end of your trade and finishing your technical training is not the end of the road if you wish to keep relevant in today's ever-changing industry.

Flammable refrigerants, ever-evolving standards and emerging technology in diagnostics are just a few examples of how our industry rapidly changes. Sign up for as many training and information nights as possible to keep your skills sharp and to be abreast of the changes in our industry.

■ **Chris Fontana, Affil.AIRAH**
Divisional manager
Degree C, Hobart

TIP #2

BE A PROBLEM SOLVER

Don't just fix the symptom and not the problem!

It occurred for a reason – whether it be poor maintenance, no maintenance, poor placement, incorrect selection, settings being wrong or something else. So get to the heart of the problem and correct it and don't be afraid to follow up.

Anyone can change out parts – work out what actually happened and why, and do corrective works.

Develop a skill-set to help you become a real problem solver, not just “a fixer upper”.

Jenny Smith, Affil.AIRAH

Owner

About Airconditioning, Darwin

TIP #3

PRACTISE, GRASSHOPPER

As a fridgie, you need to appreciate that the answers aren't always readily available.

When making changes to a system during service, the system may need to be closely monitored for lengthy periods before any change is identified. Some things you can tweak and see the change immediately, but for many others, such as TX valves, the change isn't instantaneous and you need to give the system time. Other examples are cycling of condenser fans, air pressure controls, and setting up high-side floats.

So don't be impatient. Give it half an hour before making any decisions that could ultimately impact the performance of the system for the worse.

Patience is also required when dealing with people in our industry – from clients to colleagues and apprentices.

We all have different strengths and weaknesses. We are not all going to be on the same page at the same time, so be patient and mindful when dealing with people.

Aaron McConnell,

Refrigeration mechanic

Airmaster Australia, Melbourne

TIP #4

GET INVOLVED WITH AN INDUSTRY BODY NEAR YOU

There are numerous industry bodies that represent our industry in different ways – AIRAH, ARMA and RACCA to name a few. These industry bodies put on information and trade nights but are also great networking events to discuss issues in our industry, problems you may face on the job, and make connections in our industry.

For example, you may have issues at a large refrigeration or air conditioning plant and you meet a fridgie who worked on it 10 years earlier in his career – these people can impart some valuable insights.

Plus you also never know where your next career opportunity may come from!

Chris Fontana, Affil.AIRAH

Divisional manager

Degree C, Hobart



Jenny Smith, Affil.AIRAH

TIP #5

COMMUNICATE AND BUILD TRUST

Learn about your client and how to read them. Some want to know a lot, while others want a report.

Think first about what you want to tell them, how you're going to tell them, and have a solution for them.

Customers need to trust you, and the only way you can build that trust is to always be honest, clear and direct.

Jenny Smith, Affil.AIRAH
Owner
About Airconditioning, Darwin

TIP #6

DIAGNOSTICS AND FAULT FINDING

We can all do with having a better understanding of wiring diagrams, but they are the type of thing best studied on site rather than in books. So seek out the opportunity to check the wiring of different systems to familiarise yourself in the event of a fault.

Having greater exposure to the many different brands and systems in the market, and how they should operate in their application, is invaluable. If you're in a big enough company, you'll probably get this opportunity but for those working in smaller companies, it might be easier said than done.

Fault-finding can sometimes test the best of us, so having a good support network of friends and colleagues can really help you out when you get stuck.

You might know someone who worked on the system prior to you, or is more familiar with the brand. Lean on them for advice, and be willing to pay it back when they, or someone else you know, needs advice.

Aaron McConnell,
Refrigeration mechanic
Airmaster Australia, Melbourne



Chris Fontana, M.AIRAH

TIP #7

BECOME GOOD AT YOUR TRADE BEFORE STARTING ANOTHER

Quite often there are refrigeration mechanics who come out of their time and start an electrical apprenticeship before they are barely competent at refrigeration.

I am all for upskilling and continual development and applaud anyone with ambition who wants to push themselves to the next level. BUT learn the necessary skills in the trade you are in before embarking on a new trade.

Generally it takes two to three years out of your time to fully master refrigeration due to its huge scope and complexity.

Chris Fontana, Affil.AIRAH
Divisional manager
Degree C, Hobart

TIP #8

BEING SELF-MOTIVATED IS MORE THAN JUST CLOCKING ON

Motivation is required to organise yourself, to work unsupervised, to want to learn and to advance yourself. No one is going to do it for you.

Don't fall into the trap of being lazy just because you work unsupervised. Taking short-cuts will short-cut your learning opportunities, and the opportunity to advance your career. Usually the lemons get found out.

Make your time valuable, and make yourself invaluable.

Ours is an ever-changing industry, so embrace all that it offers – the opportunities, the challenges and the rewards that will come from hard work.

Aaron McConnell,
Refrigeration mechanic
Airmaster Australia, Melbourne

TIP #9

YOUR PAPERWORK IS A PART OF YOUR JOB

Every time you fill in a timesheet, maintenance log, etc., you are completing an important legal document.

It is a record to your clients of the work you have done and materials used. It is also a record to your employer of hours worked, and materials used, and is an absolutely critical part of operating a business.

Unfortunately, happy clients are not worth a lot if the business you work for is not financially profitable. To keep a business profitable the paperwork (or electronic timesheets) must be filled in correctly. If this is done properly, rather than chasing you for your paperwork, your employer will be spending time doing more important things such as chasing down new work opportunities or being proactive in ensuring the business runs smoothly rather than being reactive to incorrect paperwork.

Chris Fontana, Affil.AIRAH
Divisional manager
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TIP #10

MAINTAIN YOUR SPACE WITH PRIDE

Present well. Keep your van, ute, tools and equipment well-maintained and presenting as professional.

Update your tools and equipment and see it as an investment in yourself. Clean up after yourself and don't leave hand marks, boot prints, rubbish etc.

And have a look at how others present themselves and then look at yourself and ask, "Am I credible?"

Jenny Smith, Affil.AIRAH
Owner
About Airconditioning, Darwin



Airmaster Australia's Aaron McConnell.

TIP #11

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS!

Whether you are undertaking air conditioning maintenance or industrial refrigeration, the state you leave your job in determines how you will be perceived.

About 90 per cent of clients have no idea what it means when you put operating pressures or current draws on your timesheet. But 100 per cent of people can recognise dirty supply-air grilles, filthy indoor unit covers or oil dripping on a plant-room floor.

Always keep the site you work at spotless and your clients will love you for it.

Chris Fontana, Affil.AIRAH
Divisional manager
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