

# Even in a down economy, this firm is the Smylie one

BY DAN VASTYAN

For Smylie One Heating, Cooling, & Plumbing Co., Inc, going green has nudged the company into growth, even during these less-than-friendly economic times.

Smylie One is a full service mechanical contracting firm involved with all types of plumbing, HVAC, hot water and steam hydronics, radiant heat, geothermal and hybrid systems installation and service work. Based in Chesterland, Ohio, their work is evenly split between



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residential and commercial work. Started in '03, Smylie One prides itself on a foundation of integrity and trust.

Today, the company is headed by Bill Smylie, Steven Smylie, Gary Rosen and Rick Coates. The four have been successfully working together for more than 30 years. With the highest quality service and a whatever-it-takes mindset, Smylie One is committed to maintaining long-term customer relationships, even if it means shipping needed parts via next-day air.

Customers always receive — you guessed it — “Service with a Smylie.” The company was built on customer referrals, and that continues to make up the bulk of their work today.

Smylie One has a three-stage guarantee offered to all residential customers who're having central HVAC systems installed:

First is their Delivery Guarantee. When a date for work to begin is scheduled, their crews will show up during that week and will remain on that job until the work is completed. If that's not the case, \$100 comes off the purchase price.

The No-Frown Guarantee is next. If a properly-maintained compressor or heat exchanger fails due to normal operation within five years, the furnace or condensing unit will be replaced at no cost to the customer.

Last in line is the Final Price Guarantee which promises that the proposal price is the final price. There are no hidden charges, even if something was overlooked, incurring additional work.

#### Unexpected growth

Smylie One managers believed that revenue in 2009 would be flat (compared to '08). But that's not what happened when the final tally was made. For last year, they saw 7% growth. Last year's expansion included two new technicians and a plumber, bringing the company total to 25 employees. And, keeping the growth curve moving in the right direction, this year is budgeted for 10% growth.

According to partner Rick Coates, (Turn to 'Service... page 116.)

## 'Service with a Smylie' more than a tagline

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the firm specializes in challenging work of greater-than-average complication. "We love a good challenge," he said. "Some of our technicians are skilled at hot water or steam system hydronic work and others are good at wrangling mini-split HVAC delivery into tight spaces."

Smylie One's residential work consists almost entirely of add-on and replacement jobs. But in the

commercial realm, their work entails some new construction. Smylie One serves about 5,000 customers, mostly in the greater Cleveland area and its surrounding suburbs.

"A lot of the work we did last year involved the installation of new high efficiency systems," said Coates. "The majority of homeowners — about 75% — are taking advantage of Federal tax credits," he added.

### Big jobs for mini-splits

Smylie One currently has bids out on two server room cooling jobs. These are interesting applications because, in order to keep the computer equipment cool, cooling systems of unusually high tonnage are required to cool relatively small areas.

The company has done several of these jobs in the past. To remedy the need for additional cooling, often for

interior spaces already served by central HVAC (though with inadequate temperature and humidity control) they routinely use Fujitsu mini-split systems.

"We like Fujitsu, and install a lot of their gear," said Coates, "Four of us have gone through their training programs and are now manufacturer-certified. This has been an advantage because Smylie One is now promoted on Fujitsu's website, and we get sales leads that way."

Smylie one recently finished a residential job that entailed cooling for a 500-sq.-ft. sunroom addition. The house is hydronically heated and has central air.

"The homeowner is a big entertainer, sometimes packing up to 40 people into that room," explained Coates. The customer wanted air conditioning in the room because in the middle of the summer it was simply too hot to enjoy. A 2-ton Fujitsu mini-split system solved the need for

cooling and dehumidification.

Another job where the Smylie crews used Fujitsu equipment was a 2,500-sq.-ft. Cape Cod that that was strapped with an undersized and inefficient central heat pump. A Smylie One crew installed an 18,000 BTU dual-zone heat pump. The evaporator units were placed at opposite ends of the home, delivering additional comfort control to the master bedroom and also to a room near the entry where the homeowners especially enjoyed reading.

"On the first day, we were very skeptical. We could hardly believe that the small indoor air units could provide the comfort we needed," explained the woman of the house (see photo). "But we're believers now and only wish we'd made the change sooner."

### 'Wet Heads', too

Smylie One offers free home plumbing inspections to customers who have a residential service agreement with them. The company also takes pride in their hydronic work, specializing in challenging installations. For water heaters, they rely chiefly on Bradford White.

A recent job in Shaker Heights consisted of a family room edition. The 450-sq.-ft. area is heated by a radiant staple-up system attached to a direct-vent Bradford White water heater.

"The Bradford White guys were here two weeks ago," said Coates, "They showed us the new Icon control and safety shut-off system they developed and now manufacture as part of all residential water heaters. It looks very promising. We'll have lots of applications for it."

### Service with a Smylie

The day after Smylie One technicians completed the ductless mini-split installation at the home with the old central heat pump, the homeowners called to say thanks.

"We convinced and converted 'em, that's for sure," said Coates, smiling. And then, as if on cue, Coates added: "Service with a Smylie,' just as promised.

"It's nice when that happens," concluded Coates. "It really is a source of satisfaction to get calls (sometimes, letters) like that because they support the reason why we're in the business after all." ■

Dan Vastyan is a trade journalist who works for *Manheim*, PA-based *Common Ground*, a trade communications firm specializing in work for the hydronic, plumbing, HVAC and renewable energy industries.



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