

Mechanical Town Hall met with tremendous success

BY JOHN MESENBRINK

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DALLAS — The [AHR Show](#) last month was met with tremendous accolades — from great traffic and buzz to satisfied exhibitors and a more educated attendee walking the show floor. According to AHR official numbers, nearly 34,000 non-exhibitor attendees filled the aisles. Meanwhile, there was another event that was met with equal fare — The Mechanical Town Hall featuring the “Fab 5.” More than 100 people, representing contracting companies, engineering firms and manufacturers, attended the event to see some of the industry’s most respected individuals talk on the subject of “Diversifying Your Business Portfolio in Today’s Economy.”



Dave Yates discusses Energy Conservation Value.

The Fab 5 panel featured John Barba, Dave Yates, Bob ‘Hot Rod’ Rohr, Eric Aune and Dan Foley. Each showed their unique experiences in the field and gave a short presentation to the crowd. The attendees had a chance to interact with the panelists by asking questions at the end of the event.

The Mechanical Town Hall was moderated by the well-known industry duo of Bob Mader and John Mesenbrink. Bob Mader, editorial director for CONTRACTOR, Radiant Living, and Green Mechanical Contractor magazines and websites, is an industry veteran with a reputation for knowing the industry and asking the tough questions. John Mesenbrink, editor-at-large for CONTRACTOR Magazine and Penton Media’s Mechanical Systems Group, is also knowledgeable and well known in the industry for bringing people together and moving the industry forward.

The players

John Barba, education and training manager at [Taco](#), kicked off the presentation talking about selling

efficiency. It was evident at the show that the majority of exhibitors were showcasing energy-efficient systems. But as a contractor, how do you sell energy efficiency? Barba broke it down like no one else can, talking about what a heating system isn't and what a heating system really is.

“What that system really is can be compared to a pig,” said Barba. “When it comes down to it, you feed your heating system, and it poops heat.” The crowd was amused by the pig, bacon and super pig references.

The second panelist to speak was CONTRACTOR magazine columnist, Dave Yates. A well known plumbing, heating and solar contractor, Yates is president of F.W. Behler in York, Pa., and he is a monthly columnist for CONTRACTOR magazine. His expertise includes solar, plumbing, heat load calculation data, boiler and water heater installation, and energy efficiency and conservation. The crowd listened intently as he spoke about leveraging upfront costs with return on investment as a tool to sell efficiency to customers, which has become better known as Yates' Energy Conservation Value (ECV).

Known to his peers in the industry as Hot Rod, Bob Rohr covered renewable energy. Topics such as photovoltaics, geothermal, solar domestic hot water, solar storage, hydronics, biomass, wood-burning and pellet boilers were on the docket. Having been a plumbing and hydronics contractor for nearly 25 years, Hot Rod is now the Educational and Training Manager for [Caleffi](#), North America, Milwaukee.

Eric Aune, [Aune Plumbing LLC](#), engaged the crowd with his presentation on the importance of social media. A small contracting company in Minneapolis, Aune relies on social networking to better brand his business and make connections. Aune, a plumbing, hydronics and solar contractor knows how to deal with the current economic situation. Diversification has to be on his plumber's license. He dabbles in solar, hydronics, plumbing, boiler and tankless installations, and other high-efficiency products to remain competitive as a small shop. He is a UA instructor at the local 15 plumber's apprenticeship program and a Taco Trade Council member.

The last speaker to present was Dan Foley, owner of [Foley Mechanical](#), Lorton, Va. Foley's business has thrived in the D.C., Virginia area. Foley specializes in mechanical rooms — heating, cooling, hydronics, solar, geothermal, controls, etc. — for large luxury homes. Recession? For Foley, his business has actually grown. How? Foley lent his secrets to the audience. He has been involved in the plumbing and heating industry for many years and he selflessly lends his time and efforts for the betterment of the industry. Foley is chairman of the Radiant Hydronics Council.

The Fab 5 is taking its talents to Philly! The Mechanical Town Hall will again be featured at Comfortech 2013 (www.hvaccomfortech.com/), Philadelphia, Sept. 18-20 at the Philadelphia Convention Center.

The Mechanical Town Hall was produced on behalf of CONTRACTOR magazine, Contracting Business magazine and mechanical-hub.com. The event was sponsored by [Aquatherm](#), [Bradford White](#), [NIBCO](#), [TACO](#), and [Weil-McLain](#).

CONTRACTOR magazine also would like to thank all the members of the Town Hall for their time and dedication to the industry.

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