

# How Can an Installer Design a Home?

By George Porter

If you are in the business of installing homes you have probably have found yourself mumbling and grumbling about the various methods factories tell you to use to put these things together. Such as:

1. The water line crossover, do the holes ever line up? No.
2. Do the roof and interior marriage wall ever close up tightly and touch at the same time? Rarely.
3. What sort of guarantee against leakage, would you the installer, put on in-floor crossover ducts that you have tried to gasket at the marriage wall? Right, probably right up until when the furnace or A/C came on for the first time
4. If you could invent a way to join the two halves what would it be? Bolts? Metal straps? Lag screws?. Velcro?
5. How long does it take you to strip the plastic off a home marriage wall? There must be a better way, right?

Well, these and any other gripes you may have, need to be known by the folks that can change things. The installers of this industry have answers to all these problems and many other good ideas as well. The catch is, when was the last time a factory hired you to advise them on these problems? Some factories will do this but most will not. You need some leverage for the 97% of the manufacturers that see this as your problem, not theirs.

Let's think about this for a minute. What could you do that would encourage dealers and factories to make your job more efficient. What single force would be the most compelling argument for improving the quality and ease of the home installation business? Well of course it's money!! This is the one area that installers have ignored too much. Everyone charges a flat rate for installing a home. It is usually based on how big or high the home is and what sort of foundation it has. I have never heard of an installation company charging differently for certain homes because they are more trouble to put together.

Have you ever spent three or more hours clawing the plastic off a marriage wall and pulling staples? Have you ever cracked the drywall while you were at it? If a factory had a way to bring this time down to about 2 hour would you give a little discount for that? It can be done and it has been done. I know of a factory that uses double headed nails to put the strips on the plastic. They bought a special nail gun just for this and it is great! The nail heads stick up and all you have to do is hook a hammer on them and pull, it's beautiful. If you are saying right now, "Boy, I sure wish my factory would do that!" then you need to put some pressure on them. Wishing alone will not get it done. Nobody cares how hard and long you work if it doesn't cost them extra money.

Tired of fighting water crossovers? Another company actually uses an extra piece of lumber under the marriage wall at the crossover opening so they can make the connection opening in the side of

the floor about three inches by eight inches. They also use zippers in the belly board so all you have to do is unzip both sides, pull down the insulation, fasten the lines through the big opening, stuff the insulation back and zip it up. How easy is that? Don't you think something like this needs to be rewarded?

Another company has created a sort of hybrid crossoverduct. The problem with in floor connections are it is almost impossible to be sure you really have an air tight fit of the gasket around the opening. Moving and adjusting the alignment of the two halves of the home can easily "smear" the gasket around the duct opening and away goes the heat or air. (See Sept. JOURNAL article, page 54). On the other hand, those long fat hoses loose a lot of heat to the crawlspace because they are not as well insulated as the floor ducts, but, they are easier to guarantee a tight fit at the connections. This company combined the best of both with in floor ducts right up to the marriage line and very short small hose connections in about four places between the halves. These little insulated hoses are about 16 inches long and are easy to hook up. This one will not save you much time at set-up but it will nearly eliminate call-backs and that costs somebody money?

If you think what you are reading here is that you should cut your prices to encourage factories to do the right thing then you haven't been reading this right. I didn't say give all the money back!

Example:

If you really do spend two hours stripping a home and you can get a home that you know two guys can always do it in thirty minutes or less and there will be no walls to fix later then you need to do a little math. Two guys times 2 hours equals what? What is the extra 1-2 hours worth to you? Lets say it's the difference between coming back tomorrow morning or going to another new job with a full day to do it in. What is your time worth for that extra 1-2 hours? Would you split the savings with the dealer? If you tell dealers that if they can get the factory to do this to their homes they will save forty bucks or so on each home... trust me, it will happen, fast. Please note that if you split the savings with the dealer then you also are saving (making) \$40. Put together several of these timesaving items and you might be talking about some real change. (Pun intended)

On the other hand if the idea of giving a discount for this stuff doesn't appeal to you, then maybe you might want to charge extra for homes that are more trouble to install. They do take more of your time and energy don't they? I will guarantee you this will be a much harder sell but maybe you can get it to work.

There will of course be many who will do nothing and continue to grumble about how unfair life is to them. They will trudge on, working longer for less with no good tools or reliable help because they can't afford either, until they can't stand it anymore and quit. If you don't take care of your installation business then who do you think is going to? "No plan" usually means "no future" and creating business relationships where both sides benefit is definitely a plan with a bright future.