

CELEBRATING LONGTIME ABC OF METRO WASHINGTON MEMBERS

Mark Hottel, Jeff Hottel, Scot Hottel
and their father, Richard Hottel.

FEATURE

HARVEY W. HOTTEL, INC.



Air conditioning was an emerging technology in 1945 when Harvey Hottel was sent to the District of Columbia by the Carrier Corporation to install air conditioning systems in commercial office buildings.

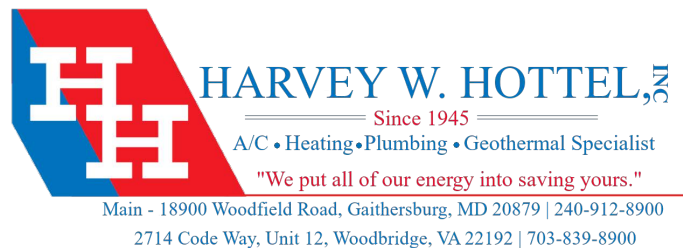
“Harvey Hottel knew it was going to take off; who does not like air conditioning in the sweltering District of Columbia summer heat? It was clear that the new technology was extremely beneficial, and over time it became more popular to install,” said Ken Fennell, vice president of business development.

Almost 80 years later, Harvey W. Hottel, Inc., stays true to its original roots, specializing in HVAC, with additional plumbing expertise. The 100-employee, ABC-member company is headquartered in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and remains a family owned company, servicing the D.C. metropolitan area.

Staying on top of technology and expanding the scope of services is essential to the company’s longevity. “One thing that is unique is our large service base alongside our in-house engineering, design-build capabilities. You will often find service companies that will not do construction, or construction companies that will not do service. We take pride in our service base. It is a favorite saying, ‘It all starts with service,’ and it really does. It enables us to develop long-term relationships with our customers,” said Fennell.

He added that the D.C. area is filled with owner-occupied facilities, in which the client has a vested interest in the operations of that facility. “That is where we are extremely effective, when we have a relationship with the owner of that facility, providing them service over years and years and years. We bring in-house engineering staff to the table and sit down to design and implement energy-efficient solutions to keep them comfortable for years to come.”

These kinds of added services are necessary, as technology has really changed the industry. For example, said Fennell, if he



puts in a new chiller, that chiller will come with web-based, built-in capabilities, which can be monitored via text alert from the customer. “You can clear alarms, check energy usage, etc. Anything you can think of doing on your computer, you can also now do on your phone,” he said.

“This leads to better comfort, better service and provides a much cleaner, seamless operation for both us and our customers,” added Jeff Hottel, a third-generation co-owner and grandson of the original owner.

The company was deemed an essential business during the pandemic, so they did not close or lay off any employees. “In fact, in many ways, we ended up putting our foot on the gas,” said Fennell, adding that while office buildings may have shut down,

schools and churches were busy trying to reevaluate ventilation of their buildings.

“It expanded the ventilation market for us. Ventilation was always important, but with the pandemic, it became vital,” said Hottel. In relation to the ventilation requirements, the installation of ultraviolet (UV) lights also significantly increased. These lights have disinfection capabilities to kill air-borne bacteria and viruses to create a healthier environment.

Though the pandemic was a challenge, Fennell said recruiting a qualified workforce into the field and into the office is an everyday, ongoing battle, and that the company is tackling this issue in two ways. “The first is, we are really encouraging and promoting women in our workforce; women are getting more into project managerial roles. The second

approach is we find young people coming out of high school and we invest in them. We pay for their education, and as long as they put in the work, we will invest in them,” said Fennell.

Hottel elaborated, “We pay for a four-year program; we pay for their vocational training. We will also do in-house training; it is specific to whatever class that they are taking, including hands-on learning that trade schools do not do enough of.”

What is new in the industry is the start of a building energy performance standard — the government quantifying the energy usage of buildings to encourage green initiatives. In the future, there will be financial penalties associated with noncompliance. “The best way to remain competitive is to use technologies to monitor and implement

energy conservation measures within these buildings. A company that is positioned to perform those tasks is the company that is going to succeed, be competitive and be well-positioned to serve their clients,” said Fennell.

Harvey Hottel has been affiliated with ABC for 50 years and has found it to be a valuable membership. “The networking events enable us to meet potential customers and even competitors in a friendly environment, assisting us to discuss the issues and be active within the industry. The second thing is the proactive advocacy they provide within local and federal government issues. They stay on top of issues that affect us and are active within that community to promote business practices that greatly affect how we manage our company,” said Hottel. ■