



# A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE GOES A LONG WAY

## PROJECT INFORMATION YOU SHARE WITH HOMEOWNERS IS VITAL EVEN IF YOUR COMPETITION IS ULTIMATELY HIRED



*Paul Scelsi, Marketing Communications Manager at Air Vent*

Michael Huston, sales manager at [Lindholm Roofing, Chicago, Illinois](#), is a big believer in sharing information with homeowners so they can make informed decisions about their roofing project – whether or not homeowners buy that new roof from Lindholm. In our podcast interview with Huston, he shared why he’s perfectly fine learning that the information he provided to the homeowner was ultimately used by his competition to give the homeowner the best new roof possible.

“In the end, you always want to do the best for the homeowner,” Huston says. “I have earned many jobs due to my grasp and understanding of proper

attic ventilation. Sometimes Lindholm Roofing’s price estimate was higher than others. I also know that even when Lindholm was not used for the project the homeowner took our knowledge to the competition that was hired, and it was appreciated. I’ve even been asked to come back to make sure it was done correctly. A little knowledge goes a long way.”

Part of that “knowledge” about the roofing project Huston is referring to is specific to the important role proper attic ventilation can play in roof’s life expectancy. Attic ventilation is supposed to be 50% intake airflow through vents installed in the soffit/overhang or low on the roof, and 50% exhaust airflow through vents positioned high on



Michael Huston  
Lindholm Roofing

the roof, at or near the peak of the roof. This combination of intake and exhaust airflow helps to flush out any potentially damaging heat and moisture buildup inside the attic. It also helps fight ice dams. But it requires both intake and exhaust airflow – a fact Huston mentions during every roof assessment with homeowners.

“Knowledge is a huge element in every project. It’s knowing what you’re talking about and knowing how to put it into simple enough terms for a homeowner to understand and realize that it’s important, not just the attic ventilation but the entire roofing system,” Huston says.

### Point of Differentiation

Huston says he tries to differentiate himself by doing an attic inspection. “Often times the competition doesn’t bother to go into the attic. They come to the home, they go along sidewalk with a rolling measuring stick, they go along the sides of the house and take a couple of pictures, they count the number of vents, but it’s not as thorough as including an attic inspection,” Huston says.

“If you go into the attic and you find mold or issues with the plywood or decking, then you know there’s already a moisture content issue, there’s a lack of proper attic ventilation,” Huston says. “Sometimes you find bathroom fan ductwork laying in the attic insulation throwing warm, moist shower vapor into the attic with no where to go. That’s a problem.”

These are just a few examples of the information Huston always shares with the homeowner because the homeowner needs to know. But some homeowners take that information to Huston’s competition.

“I always want to be hired by the homeowner. I want to close 100% of my homeowner visits. And I earn a lot of the projects I quote due to my knowledge. But sometimes you don’t get hired. In terms of losing jobs to the competition, no one is ever happy when you go out to do an estimate, and a roofing project that might be \$10, \$15, \$20,000 is lost because someone else is a lower price than you,” Huston admits. “And you learn that

the knowledge you gave to the homeowner was used to help them make an informed decision with your competition; and your competition used that knowledge to do a better job than they likely would have otherwise done. That’s still a positive outcome.”

It’s a positive outcome, he says, because ultimately the homeowner received the best possible roof. Furthermore, the more roofing companies out there installing roofs the best way possible, the better it is for the residential roofing industry at large. Huston says it sometimes even leads to referrals!

### Losing Bids but Gaining Referrals

“There have been times the homeowners have asked me to come by and look at the roof installed by my competition to make sure it was done right. I’ll stop by and try to give homeowners the ‘feel good’ feelings they’re looking for before they pay for the roof, or they already paid for,” Huston says. “I may suggest some changes on occasion. I’m not one to knock another person’s work but if I see something that maybe could have been done a little bit better I’ll put it in those cordial words. Sometimes it’s necessary for the roofing contractor to come back to change something.

“I’ve seen the ridge vent slot cut too narrow or excessively wide, neither of which is correct. It’s important that the homeowner gain the entire advantage of the product they are paying for,” he says.

“The nice thing about homeowners calling you back, homeowners trusting you, homeowners understanding that you know a little more than the next guy because you took the time to be thorough and explain the entire roofing system, it leads to new business. These homeowners end up referring me to their friends, family and neighbors, even though originally they did not hire me,” Huston says. “I get referrals out of lost jobs. How many people can say that? Sometimes the business you lose you still get additional business from that with your knowledge. It’s not just attic ventilation but the roofing system in general.”

Huston says Lindholm Roofing as a company has made sure its team of employees understand the full roof system – not just attic ventilation – and how

## STEEP SLOPE

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it works, how the various components are connected, and how to easily explain it to homeowners. That's noticed and remembered by homeowners.

As an extension of Huston's passion for sharing knowledge with homeowners, he's a regular guest on the home improvement radio show Home Sweet Home Chicago on WGN 720 AM fielding calls from homeowners. Two common incoming questions he fields deal with fighting ice dams in the winter and what's a reasonable attic temperature in the summer – topics we've covered in podcast episodes.

"Knowledge is a huge element in anything someone wants to do. In anything in life you do, knowledge goes a long way," Huston says. "And in the roofing industry, the more you know, the more you can portray yourself as knowledgeable about the product or service you are providing, the more success you're going to find. That's true in anything. In life."

## The Poem

Huston combined his passion for sharing knowledge and performing best practices in roof installations with his writing skills when he wrote this poem for me a few years back in advance of our attic ventilation seminar in the Chicago area. I'd like to share it with you.

So a new roof is installed, and the shingles look great. But was it done right, there is a debate.

While ice shield and felt and the flashings are new, Proper attic ventilation is considered by only a few.

If warm moist air rises and has nowhere to go, What you'll need is a way to allow air to flow.

Intake and exhaust, you should combine the two, And to balance them out is what you should do.

So take a seat, contractors, Air Vent's seminar is in town. They'll explain proper ventilation as both a verb and a noun.



Paul Scelsi is marketing communications manager at Air Vent and leader of its Attic Ventilation: Ask the Expert™ seminars (airvent.com). He hosts the podcast, "Airing it out with Air Vent," and he's the chairman of the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association Ventilation Task Force. He is the author of the book, *Grab and Hold Their Attention: Creating and Delivering Presentations that Move Your Audience to Action*.