

# Letters

## Getting Things Right

In his article “Efficiency Dos and Don’ts” (10/06), Martin Holladay states that if an attic is insulated, “high attic temperatures don’t matter much.” This is a short-sighted view of energy efficiency. Attics are ventilated to protect the roof. Excessive attic temperatures will drastically shorten the life of an asphalt-shingle roof. How much energy will be wasted manufacturing and installing a new roof?

Also, on page 39 of the same issue (Q&A), you show a picture of what is supposed to be fiber-cement siding with water intrusion at the butt joints. It doesn’t look like fiber-cement siding to me.

Many people read your magazine to find out how to do things right. Please be careful and get things right before you print them.

**Jerry Domagala, CMI**  
National Property Inspections  
Bellingham, Wash.



*Author Martin Holladay responds: No researcher in the U.S. has spent more time studying the relationship between attic temperatures and asphalt-shingle durability than William Rose, a research architect at the Building Research Council at the University of Illinois.*

*In his recent book, Water in Buildings, Rose summarizes what he has learned from years of careful research: “Does ventilation*

*significantly reduce shingle temperatures? The short answer is no, not significantly. Shingle color is a very strong determinant of shingle, sheathing, and attic temperature. ... In a vented cathedral ceiling, venting can cool shingles in the lower part of the roof; it cannot cool shingles high in the roof. ... As long as shingle manufacturers ignore the effects of shingle color as a determinant of temperature, they may be admonished for asserting so strongly the importance of venting to control temperature. ... In short, on the basis of currently available information, attic ventilation is only marginally beneficial to shingle durability. Attic ventilation does not deserve the attention it has received in relation to shingle durability.”*

*If your clients prefer cool shingles to warm shingles, the amount of ventilation behind the sheathing is far less important than the shingles’ color; so advise them to choose white shingles.*

*A note from the editors: Regarding the photo on page 39 of the October issue, that is in fact fiber cement. Another view is shown at left.*

## Cynicism or Basic Economics?

Leland Stone’s view (“Pricing Handyman Work,” *Business*, 10/06) that the purpose of any business “is to earn the highest profit on the least expenditure possible” is an eye-opener, but his cynicism about the services that companies tout could suggest that he is also cynical about the services he provides.

In my experience, many a business and many a businessman recognize multiple purposes — making a profit and providing services worthy of that profit.

**Charles Smith**  
Fort Collins, Colo.

*Author Leland Stone responds: Mr. Smith is welcome to his opinion regarding the cynicism he perceives in my business philosophy, but his assumption — that my service is not equal to the profit I thereby gain — is flawed.*

*In any transaction, there is a minimum of a buyer and a seller. The view of the transaction I offered (“highest profit on the least expenditure possible”) came from the*

### KEEP 'EM COMING!

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*seller's perspective. Readily apparent, though not described in my article, was the opposing perspective of the buyer: "Obtain the most and best goods or services for the least expenditure possible."*

*In spite of their opposition, the seller and the buyer may reach agreement on a price and conduct a transaction. It is this transaction that then determines whether the seller's offering is worth the profit sought. While that may appear cynical, it's basic economics.*

## When Employees Compete

I'd like to respond to Ron Edge's letter, "Builder Seeks Input From Other GCs" (11/06). I have had the same problem in the past, with workers trying to score side work from my customers. I'm a strong believer in loyalty, and I fired them on the spot. I also stopped doing work for those customers.

In time, I came out ahead, because the former employees joined the stream of "low price" carpenters. In fact, they got the

reputation of being cheap, which of course means cutting corners. This results in problems with unhappy homeowners, and reputations go down the drain. That is exactly what happened, and the carpenters came back, begging for a job.

Keep doing what you do best. Maybe you'll lose a few jobs with people who don't appreciate your professional service, but your reputation will remain good — and that's more important than anything else in this business.

I would also like to comment on licensing — namely, that states should enforce their licensing laws more forcefully to crack down on illegal contractors. Word will get around and push these people out of the industry. As it is, licensed GCs continue to lose jobs to guys who carry no overhead, do shoddy work, underestimate jobs, steal deposit money, and so on. This just gives the rest of us a bad name.

**Greg Levitt, Owner**

GN Builders  
Plainsboro, N.J.