

This is Only a Test

By Joseph P. Guzzo

Recently I was part of an interview team for the purpose of hiring a plumber. Like all interviewers, we each had our own list of questions for the applicants. Being the only plumber on the committee my questions were most related to our trade and code.

I purposely chose questions that were not complicated. Just some basic questions meant to see if the applicant actually reads the code every once in a while. I will not go over all the questions, but I will discuss the two that produced the most interesting answers.

Question #1 “Please explain the purpose of a plumbing permit.” Answers: “to make sure the job is done right,” “to collect money to pay for a Plumbing Inspector,” “to protect the homeowner,” “to protect the consumer and assure good workmanship,” “to protect the public,” “to protect the plumber,” “to protect the water system,” and “to have some control and oversee the work.”

I explained the true purpose and intent of a plumbing permit in a previous article titled “The Solid Gold Plumbing Permit.” It is most unfortunate that many plumbers and in fact even more people have the misconception that plumbing permits were created in order to collect a fee. What is important is how the regulation is written. Plumbing and gas work may not be performed without first obtaining a permit. The only person that can get a plumbing or gas permit is a licensed plumber or gas fitter. Fees are not part of the regulations. The permit is used as a vehicle that validates the law.

Only one answer was close to being correct, “to have some control and oversee the work.” One answer was flat out wrong, “to collect money and pay for a Plumbing Inspector.” The other answers “to protect the public,” etc., were at best indirectly correct.

Question #2, for the Journeyman applicants: “After you passed your Journeyman’s exam, what is the reason you did not get your Masters?” And for the Master applicants: “Why did you obtain a Master Plumbers license?”

Prior to asking this question to the applicants, I explained to the team all of the steps plumbers must go through to get their licenses. I told them to listen carefully to the answers, and not going for your masters could be a sign of lack of ambition.

Answers, “I wanted to get my masters as soon as possible after I passed my Journeyman’s because the schooling would be fresh in my mind and I would have a better chance of passing.” “I got my masters because it is the top license in the trade,” “I did not get my masters because I got lazy,” I did not get my masters because I didn’t have any time,” “I did not get my masters because I don’t run a business and don’t need it.”

They were surprised at the answers but especially astonished at one. Imagine you’re trying to get a job and impress people and you say “I got lazy.” Can you muster up enough strength to get up and open the door?

First, not getting a Master Plumbers License does not make you a bad person. Even more it doesn’t make you a bad plumber. In fact I have seen Journeyman Plumbers run circles around Masters, both in knowledge of the code and workmanship. But the facts are undeniable that there really isn’t any good reason why a Journeyman does not get their Masters. The only reasonable conclusion is simply lack of ambition, or as the plumber said in the interview “I got lazy.” And to use the excuse that you’re not going to run a

business, is just a cop out, another lame excuse for not pursuing the top license in your trade.

So a word to the Journeyman - if you are content with working for someone or working alone, "that's by yourself," no problem, stick with the Journeyman's. But someday you may find yourself in competition perhaps for a job. The Master Plumber will most always win out.