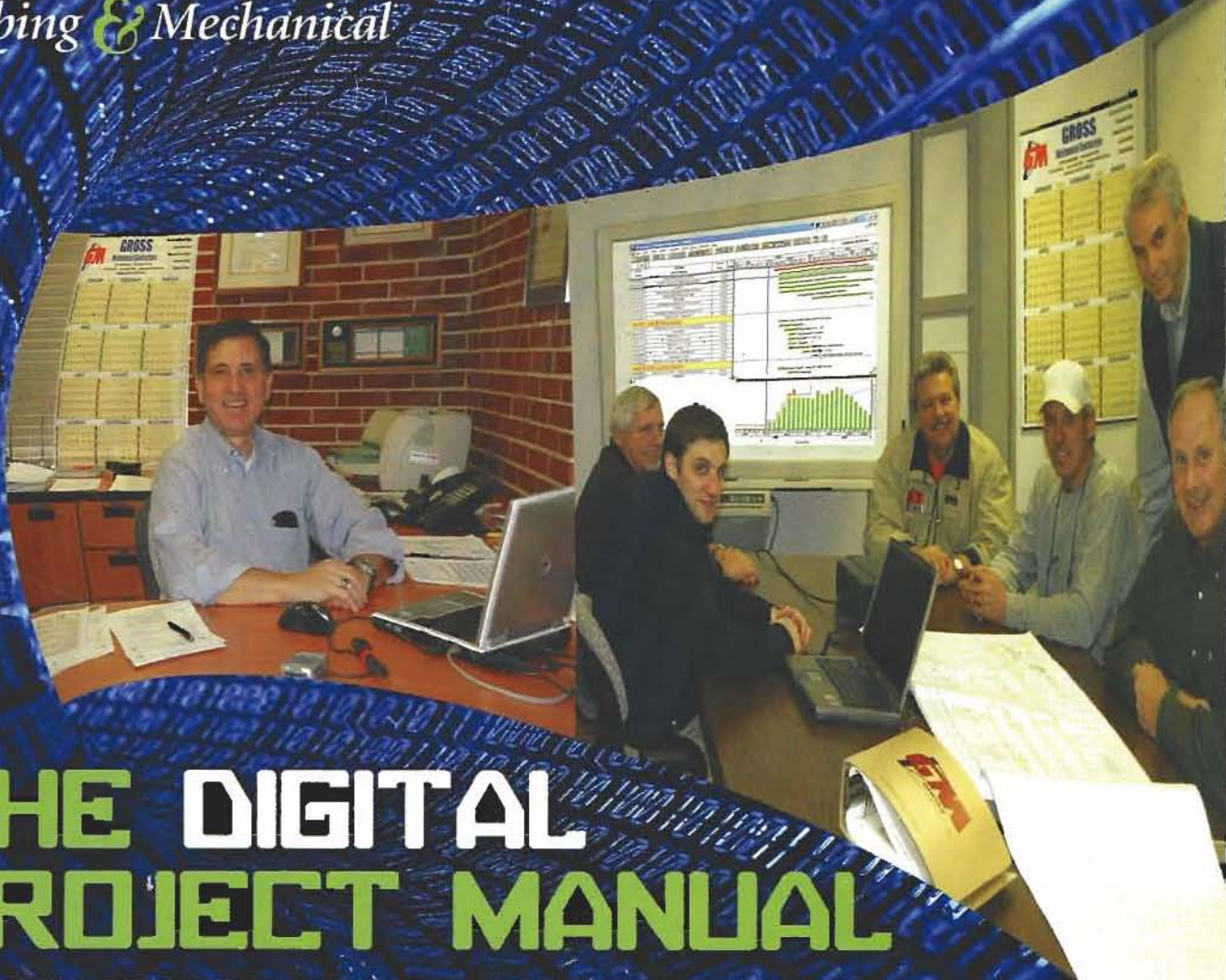


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P M

Plumbing & Mechanical

- ▶ Bathroom Accessories
- ▶ Fire Sprinkler Retrofit Realities



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ON THE COVER



42



48



78

News & Features

8 Around The Industry

California Learns Tough Realities Of New Lead Law; UA To Hold Apprenticeship Contest

14 Newsmaker Profiles

A Q&A with Mary Kennedy Thompson, incoming president of Mr. Rooter.

42 The Digital Filing Cabinet

Gross Mechanical Contractors Inc.'s online project management system defines tasks clearly so nothing is misunderstood, and makes retrieving information easy so that nothing is misplaced.

48 PM's Truck Of The Month Kriegers' Professional Plumbing, Sawyer, Mich.

Highlighting the interesting and unusual in plumbers' trucks.

78 Plumbing Trends: Bathroom Accessories

An "accessory" adds to the beauty, convenience or effectiveness of something else.

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Bathroom Accessories

ONE WAY TO define an “accessory” is: an object or device that, while not essential in itself, adds to the beauty, convenience or effectiveness of something else. In this case, a *bathroom accessory* can be any of the following hot-ticket items for your customers.

Comfort Counts: One of the top forgotten features in a bathroom remodel is radiant floor warming. And as consumers continue their search for little luxuries, the market is wide open for contractors willing to plant the seed.

“Hard surface sales are experiencing phenomenal residential growth,” says Kathleen Scranton, marketing manag-



er for Easy Heat. “Particularly because hard surfaces have a long life and are viewed as eco-friendly,” Scranton points out that floor warming goes hand-in-hand with the hard surfaces your customers want in their homes.

What contractors need to do to sell this comfort feature, Scranton says, is to educate their customers on the features and benefits of the product, and don’t forget the “techie” aspect of the systems. “Technology in the home has become very important to homeowners.”

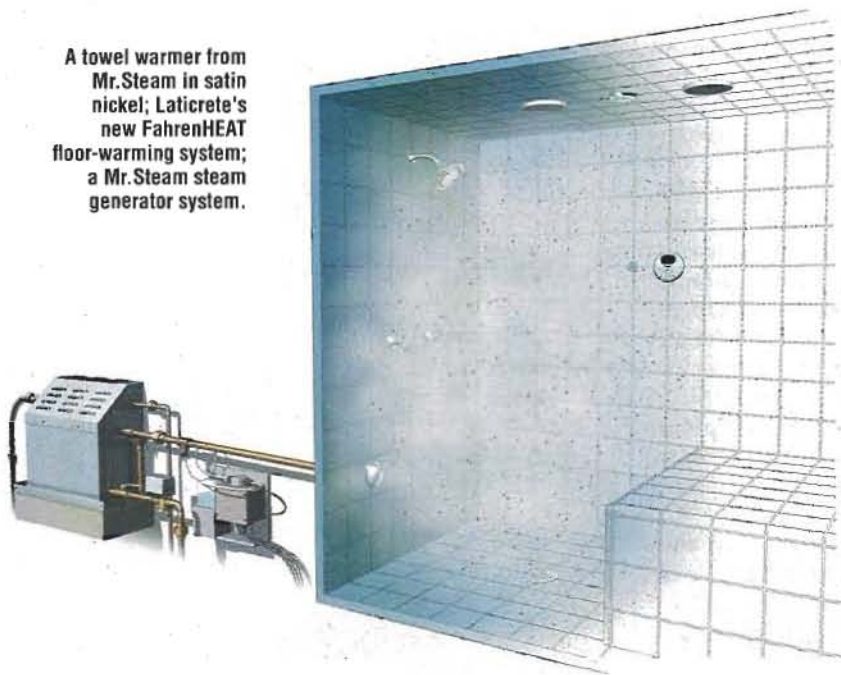
Electric floor warming can be installed relatively simply. Many manufacturers, such as Danfoss, Jacuzzi, and even tile and stone manufacturer Laticrete, have developed their own brands of mat floor warming. FahrenHEAT from Laticrete is a thin-set installation rather than stapled, and the company can provide a single warranty to the consumer, further simplifying the buying decision.

Warm And Dry: Extending the comfort of warmth in the bathroom could also mean towel warmers, which additionally compliment home spa, pool areas and exercise rooms. Towel warmers are available in a variety of wall, floor or pivoting models to fit the space needs of a room. Myson Inc.’s Premier Space-Saver model is perfect for tight areas or guest bathrooms. As for style, the finishes and design of today’s towel warmers work well in either contemporary or traditional décor.

Whether electric or hot water supplied, towel warmers can be installed in any home for that little extra luxury and comfort consumers crave.

Getting Steamed: Good health and well-being are also on the forefront of consumers’ minds, so it’s no wonder steam bathing is on the rise. The experience homeowners receive in the saunas of their health clubs and day spas now can be mirrored in their own showers.

A towel warmer from Mr. Steam in satin nickel; Laticrete’s new FahrenHEAT floor-warming system; a Mr. Steam steam generator system.



"Homeowners are now able to take pleasure in a 10-minute spa vacation in the privacy of their own homes," says Mr.Steam® President Charles Monteverdi.

Lucky for the plumber, generating steam in the home has become much easier. Mr.Steam generators (www.mrsteam.com) can be installed in closets, vanities, basements or heated attics. It's compactly designed for performance and durability, the company says, and with its AutoFlush® feature, the system remains clean. Water is drained after each use and fresh water is introduced to flush the system before the next steambathing session.

Your customers will appreciate the benefits of steam, which relieves pain in tired, aching muscles; promotes healthy respiration; and soothes and relaxes the body overall. Additional accessories for steam systems could include aromatherapy, mood-enhancing lighting, and even in-shower speakers.

The Unexpected: As mentioned before, homeowners are getting more comfortable with technology in the bathroom. From digital shower systems, such as Kohler Co.'s Kohler DTV that "remembers" a bather's showering habits and recalls it at the touch of a button, to watching TV while you soak with flat-panel televisions integrated into towel warmers, such as Aquavision from Myson.

Builders and contractors in the past may have resisted installing luxury showers or component-driven systems, but

plumbing technology has come a long way in simplifying the set-up process. Advanced valves and controls have made performance showers possible, even at lower price points. Nowadays, there can be a spa experience for any household budget. But the fact remains that many of your customers are not aware that the bath accessories mentioned in this article are easily available to them.

Contractors and installers still have a major influence over household buying decisions. *PM* columnist Maurice Maio offers a few tips on how to suggest these amenities:

- Offer specials or run an "item of the month" on your company Web site.
 - Have your call-taker share specials over the phone, or create an on-hold message.
 - Service technicians could wear "Don't forget to ask me about ___" buttons.
 - Use a flat-rate system. Technicians can mention that they can complete additional work on the same service call at a reduced price.
 - Provide service agreements that include home inspections. Service technicians can identify repair or replacement items, as well as systems in need of improvement.
- "Add-on business is a consistent contributor to profits in well-run service and repair companies," Maio says. Make your customers aware of today's bathroom accessories, and add to their happiness and yours.

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