

# Transcript

Krystal Hobbs 0:04

Welcome to Beyond the Tools, the podcast that helps contractors attract more leads, grow their business, and finally get off the tools. In each episode, you'll discover marketing tactics that work. You'll get actionable insights from other successful contractors, and connect with experts to help you grow. I'm your host, Krystal Hobbs, owner of a social media agency that helps contractors attract and convert more leads. Get ready to take your business to the next level so you can finally enjoy the fruits of your hard labor. Ready, let's go!

Welcome back to Beyond the Tools. I'm your host, Krystal Hobbs. I've just gotten back from a little hiatus. I took some vacation time and spent some time catching up. But now I am so excited to bring you all these great new interviews with HVAC and other trade owners. Today on the podcast is no different. We've got an incredible interview with Jennifer Reynolds from Jenergy Air Services. Jen's company is based in Florida and not only is she super energetic and entertaining (which you guys will hear shortly). She is also a whip-smart business owner who has gone through some pretty significant transitions and challenges in her business, which has led to even more significant growth. So today, Jen takes us through what some of those big transitions were, including her husband and head technician stepping away from the company. Jen discusses how she handled everything they did to ensure that they continued to provide excellent service, and how all of these pivots, challenges, and opportunities ultimately lead her to grow the firm from a few individuals to over 13 now. So, taking a page from Jen's notebook, I'm going to go in feet first. So we're gonna go right to the interview. So let's check it out.

Krystal Hobbs 2:22

I'm thrilled to welcome today's guest, Jennifer Reynolds of Jenergy Air Services. Welcome to the show, Jen.

Jennifer Reynolds 2:30

Thanks for having me.

Krystal Hobbs 2:31

So I really like how you got into the trades. And I know you had your father manage a

trades company, but how did you transition? How did you start in the trades and then switch to running your own company?

Jennifer Reynolds 2:54

It's kind of been like a long journey. Well, my father was a commercial AC guy that worked for a large department store. And I actually married an AC guy and started dating one because I thought I found a guy that my dad would finally approve of, and he was a really nice, tall, handsome AC guy and his father owned an air conditioning company. So fast forward a year and a half later, I'm pregnant and I'm in a job I don't like. And his father owned a small business, and he said, "You know what, come work for me." He was attempting to get more organized and he wanted me to enter into QuickBooks.

And so I sat in his office for days and days with my belly growing bigger and bigger and all the customers and started answering phones for dispatching. And then his company was growing. So he finally built an office. He made me a dispatcher. And so I was like learning AC, answering phones, I've always had a really good personality as far as phones, well, in real life, too. And so I really liked dispatching and talking on the phone to customers and really helped him grow his business. Then we decided to part ways we'll just say that nicely. And I took on a career in the gym industry because I had gained a lot of weight while working for him and I just had a baby. And I decided to go on a diet and I lost 100 pounds and wanted to work in an environment where I would stay fit and motivated.

So I've got a job at a gym. I became a personal trainer and achieved all these fantastic things in the gym sector, and I got pregnant again. I competed in a bodybuilding show right after that. Then I decided that I needed more time with my children. My father-in-law invited me to come back and work for him. But now he works for a franchise that I won't name, and they were encouraging him that women can do sales and should do sales. While I was working at a gym and doing extremely well in sales, he thought to himself, "Well, Jen has a nice personality. She reminds me of a Tomgirl. Let's get her in here." He also put me through all of these sales training courses.

And I started doing sales for him for his company, and I did a lot of sales for him, but largely marketing because I realized I wasn't making money if the phone didn't ring if I didn't have appointments. I'm not going to sit around and wait for someone to feed me; instead, I'll feed myself. So someone advised that I start networking, and I was like, "What is networking?" I had no idea what it was. So I walk into these meetings and see

people throwing out business cards and talking about their companies, and I see an opportunity to really promote his brand and company. So I started attending every meeting I could think of and joining the Chamber of Commerce until I was finally invited to a BNI chapter, which I'm not sure about, is there a BNI up where you are now? It's international.

Krystal Hobbs 5:47

To where I am, there is not. But in other parts of Canada, there are.

Jennifer Reynolds 5:51

Okay. BNI was really great for me because it was a one print industry type group, and basically just made friends all over the community on behalf of his AC company, and was growing his business like crazy with service and sales, and I was tracking through the software, all the different groups that I was in, and who would call from what, and I realized that I had brought him in like \$1.2 million in business. And I was only getting paid like this much money, and I was like, there's some value to what I'm doing for him. And granted, there were things I was taking care of, like, bought me a car, and he was paying for it, which is a tax write-off, but I know now, and gas and things, but I wanted to make more money.

So I asked him for a raise, I said, "Look, I brought you in (showed him the reports from the software), this is much money I brought in for you. And I think it's time that I make more money." And he was like, "You don't need more money. You already have a nice house and a nice car." And I was like, "Well, I'd like to have a nicer house and a nicer car. And I think that I'm worth that." And he just kind of dismissed it, like, the numbers were fake. And I was like, "Well, I quit. I'm leaving. This is my two-week notice. And I'm not going to work for you anymore." So I get a job at a marketing company. And it was kind of perfect because it was a company that I had hired to do our website for our business, the former business that I worked for, and they got a huge account with the carrier.

And so now they were looking for someone to sell marketing to air conditioning companies. And I had the AC knowledge and the marketing experience. So I traveled the state of Florida meeting carrier dealers and sitting down and helping them redesign their websites and their social media campaigns, and helping them rebrand. So it was fun. But I was traveling a lot. And at that time, I had two foster kids and two kids of my own living at my house. So when my husband got this bright idea to start a business and start our own company, because he's a licensed contractor. And I was like "Oh no, I

did not want to leave a steady paycheck.” There's some fear to them. And he's “We could do it.” And I was like, “Alright, fine, let's just do it.” So we just dove in. And I use all my marketing buddies at my company to help me create the idea behind my brand. I tapped into my network at BNI for all my logo showing my printing invoices, my website creation, my business card creation, I had this team of people that I had close relationships with that did what I needed to start a business and we started the brand, Jenergy Air Services. And we called ourselves Jenergy Air Services because people always call me Jenergy because I have a lot of energy, and it's kind of a contagious form of energy. People love being around me and networking, and bouncing around the room talking to millions of people, and it just kind of became a thing. So it started in the gym industry.

I was working out a lot and probably drinking a lot of caffeinated beverages too. And they're like sipping water. My boss says, he's like, “You, we need to bottle up your energy and sell it.” He's like, “We'll call you Jenergy.” And I loved the energy, that's like, perfect. So that's why we named the company because Jenergy in energy and energy savings and air conditioning go hand to hand and it just stuck. And I remember telling my father-in-law, like, “We're starting our own company, and we're gonna call it Jenergy Air Services.” He's like, “Nobody's gonna call a company name Jenergy.” Well, guess what? They're calling now. So that's kind of how it came to be. And my husband and I decided to make me the majority owner because we wanted to take advantage of the women-owned business benefits. And, that's kind of how the company got started was basically, I don't know, my network and knowing that I had a network of people that were already following me on social media. And, like I had that time like 3000 followers on Facebook. And just that I could spread the word and just start networking on behalf of my own business instead of his business. We can make the phone ring and it worked. It worked

Krystal Hobbs 9:56

Amazing. So essentially, you were able to build this community of people who were interested in you generally and build those relationships and that really helped kind of propel your growth right from the start. I love that. And I think it's really interesting because I don't see it a ton in the trades, how you've used a personal brand approach. So like putting yourself out there. And I think that's something that I definitely admire about what you're doing. But can you tell us a little bit about how you've used your own personality in your branding?

Jennifer Reynolds 10:38

That's actually kind of funny. Because in my logo, which I'm sure you guys will see, I'm flexing my bicep, and I am like the Rosie the Riveter of air conditioning, but kind of combining my gym background, and I'm a competitor, I have been a competitive bodybuilder in the past, and I've lost 100 pounds. So people see me and they'll like, flex their arm? And so, I and my branding, too. So I don't really advertise a lot. But I do play a commercial to local movie theaters that you have to go to sit down and you order dinner, and I paid for the premiere spot. And the commercial is very entertained. It's very much like me, an energetic bubble. It's a musical where I had people dancing and stuff. And that's kind of why how our company is fun. It's serious, but I want everybody to have a good time. It's light-hearted and laughing. And when I'm in customers, because I do in home sales as well. And when I'm at the home, kids will see me and they're like, "Are you the girl from the movie theater?" And I'm like, "Yes, I am." They're so excited. We'll take a selfie and I'll post it on Facebook. And all my trucks, my branding is it's me. This is something that other people need to understand. Instead of spreading myself too thin, I started with a small town that I knew I wanted to grow up in, and so when the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club. I sponsored events that kids were going to be at because kids have parents. And when kids like you and they've got a tattoo of you, which I have tattoos with my logo on them on their arm, that candy in them, they got to sit with me and hang out with me, their parent and I posted pictures on social media, too. And their parents' friends will tag them, just, they're kicking me at an event. It really helps to see that kids trust me. I don't know. I just branded myself as this fun-loving person. And I'm always like this at restaurants and the grocery store, putting my cat to the grocery store, which is another story. But yeah, I have really personally branded myself. So, I don't drink in public anymore.

Krystal Hobbs 12:46

Like no one recognize me please.

Jennifer Reynolds 12:47

I put on my sunglasses. Masks really help during COVID, too. So yeah, I've added my own personal touch to it. My logo is also everywhere and people love it, they enjoy it, every salesperson who comes through my door, "I really like your logo." Because it's colorful and it's me. So I wore my T-shirts backward. And I tell my boys, "I've got your back," as if I'm physically on their backs. So that's the long explanation of how I choose a brand and a business. Simply put, be their feet on the ground, people throwing out business cards, sponsoring events, doing charity work while wearing my T-shirt, and

posting about it on social media. I'm on fundraising committees for major events here, including one for the Green Berets and another for children who have been victims of human trafficking. And I'm a big supporter of it. And I spent a lot of time attending meetings and soliciting donations, as well as simply meeting as many people as possible but also saying things like, "Hey, by the way, I own an air conditioning company; if you need anything, call me." And that small effort puts you in their heads and their hands with your business card. And, at some point, everyone will require air conditioning, plumbing, or roofing, but when they believe they know someone, that's the power of branding; they must first trust you and then know how to contact you. That's how the business gets started.

Krystal Hobbs 14:18

Love that. And I think that makes total sense that everything that you've built has been around building those relationships and having yourself infused in your brand is a way to do that at a bigger scale. So I'd love to kind of dig in a little bit into the last couple of years because I know Jenergy Air Services has really grown and you've also gone through some really interesting transitions. So tell me a little bit about some of the big changes that have happened in your business in the last couple of years.

Jennifer Reynolds 14:58

So being there for years as a technician and installer. Then having him join the company. I wouldn't say my husband, who has probably been doing AC since he was a teenager and has been installing your fixtures for his father for the past 30 years. And he had the attitude of taking it easy. He's also not particularly monetarily motivated. My husband just wants to come home and relax with enough money in the bank, food on the table, and beer in the fridge. He's also not a go-getter. So remember when he put me on the side of a truck and declared me the majority owner of the company? Because I'm so motivated, I believe he regrets it at times. And I want to be successful in everything I've ever done; I've just finished it, but at 150 percent, and now I'm a brand and a logo, and he believes he'll have an easy time with it. My main technician installer is him. That was no longer the case.

So he had some burnout problems, and burnout is a thing in the profession where people work so hard, especially in heated environments. I mean, Florida summers last for about seven months, and the humidity here, as well as those attics, I see why he complained about them now that I've been in them. It was referred to as an attic. And I'm like a roofing nail in the head. And it's difficult. So we're not here to whine; I don't care; we have \$6000, go to work. And I didn't feel sorry for him. As a result, the

relationship suffered. He said, "That's it, I'm done," approximately a year and a half ago. "I need to sell because I can no longer work with you." And I couldn't understand why he would want to sell a business that was flourishing; we now had four employees instead of just two and me. And he wanted to sell, so I thought about it.

And I called in some other AC owners that I knew and trusted that we were going to expand my area and I brought them into the business. And I was like what you think and they're like, "Jen, if I were you, I would not sell. You're onto something here and it would be foolish for you to sell your business because your husband doesn't want to work anymore." So luckily, somebody came into my business and was referred to me by somebody that I met in the community that knew a guy that wanted to do sales, and we brought him and he's like, "Look, let your husband take a three-month break. Let him go find himself for three months. And I will come in and I will teach you how to run this business." Because I didn't know technical, I don't know anything about repairing air conditioners or job costing. I know how to make the phone ring and know how to answer phones and run an office. So we spent three months I work with me really closely and basically taught me how to run the company without my husband. He brought other guys in from other businesses that were very knowledgeable. And this is how I was able to help my husband transition out of the business. I got other guys to come on board and I find that when they come to work with me, they love it. Because they're used to cranky guys, they're like, "Your numbers are low" or "You're on that job for six hours too long," and I now know how to be that guy, but to do with a smile on my face and expectations in my heart and to create a fun work environment because they're still here. They've been working for me now for almost two years. And they enjoy coming to work every day. And they say they love it because it's just they love being a part of this family environment. So long story short, for two years, we had COVID. And in Florida, everybody had to work from home.

And COVID came just before spring, which is our summer basically. And so now people are working from home, and they have to live in their crappy air conditioning. The stuff they can ignore and go to the office every day is now their office. So they're not traveling, they're not spending money on gas, so they're buying air conditioning systems. And that really helped us grow our business too. And then we had the PPP loans here from our wonderful government and that helped infuse us with money that I could now invest back into the company and market. And we also by chance, got this great office opportunity to move out of like we were in a classroom, a little room in the back of this building. And we got the opportunity to have this huge office like 5000

square feet of warehouse and 1200 square feet of office space, it's right on a major road, for very little. So we've been here now for a year. And this location has just been so amazing, just giving us so much exposure to 60,000 cars a day that drive by right in the center of our county, with my yellow trucks all lined up with my happy face and bicep.

Jennifer Reynolds 19:24

And I just branded the heck out of the windows in the front. And I've been acquiring more people. And just recently one of the major competitors that I always respected because they did business the right way. Because you have those competitors that you're like they're shady. And this company I really respected and they sold. They got that million-plus dollar offer and they're like, "Alright, I'm out." And when they sold, they sold to a private equity firm that just buys up businesses combines them, and changes the culture of the business and their employees were happy with the new culture and so they asked me for jobs. And I was like, "Come on, let's go." So I'm buying trucks. And so now I've basically combined my company with this company, well four of their core employees, because they had a lot more employees than four, and our cultures are combining and we're having a great time. And we're also attracting some of the old customers from the former business because now they know where their people are and it's been helping us with our growth as well. So I guess that good energy, the good Jenergy, just attracts people and attracts employees, and really helped me grow over the past. So now, by the way, I just spent the last year studying to get my contractor's license, and I just passed my test a month ago. So I will be a licensed mechanical contractor. In the next two weeks I should have my license.

Krystal Hobbs 20:49

Congratulations. That is so huge. So your team now, how many people are you guys?

Jennifer Reynolds 21:03

I have 13 people on payroll right now including myself, so let's just say 12. That's a lot from a pregnant personal trainer to now a CEO, Executive licensed contractor of an air conditioning company.

Krystal Hobbs 21:17

That's incredible. You should be so proud of the growth that you've had and what you've been able to accomplish so far.

Jennifer Reynolds 21:25

I still don't believe it. I don't know. It just doesn't seem like it's real but it is.

Krystal Hobbs 21:31

So I know you touched on briefly with your husband's transition, and how initially it did cause a strain on your family. But over the last little while, now that you've made those changes and all that, how has that affected your family life?

Jennifer Reynolds 21:51

It's great because he's home all the time. He's basically working on a book right now. He's writing a book about his journey to where he is now. So, our oldest daughter is in college. So she's away at college and our son's 14. So, my whole life is great. Everybody is content and happy. And we're in a good place. He's really proud of what I've accomplished. Because my story, originally, I wanted to talk about the technician mindset of things, we're hard, we shouldn't do hard things. And I have a jump in feet first and ask later for forgiveness kind of mentality. And now that he's kind of out of the way, the company is growing by leaps and bounds, because we don't have this, keep it small, keep it easy mindset anymore. And he's so proud of all that I've accomplished with him out of the way, so it's been really great.

Krystal Hobbs 22:43

That's fantastic. And I know, you said that you started doing in-home sales. So tell us a little bit more about that and how has that helped or hindered growth.

Jennifer Reynolds 22:54

I love doing sales. I don't know why I love it so much. I just really love getting into a customer's house, sitting down with them, talking to them, meeting them, being in their home. When you're in someone's home, it's different, like, I have some friends whose home I've never been in before, it was sort of I tuned your home and it's like they're kind of exposing themselves to you. And I don't know. I really enjoy it. It forced me to learn more about air conditioning. So I really had to learn about air pollution systems and sizing and heat loads and all of that. But I really liked connecting with people and getting to know their stories. Obviously, I'm a people person and I'm very much, I don't know, excitable? And they love to have the owner in the house, especially when I'm crawling around in their attic. They're like, "Are you really going to go in my attic?" And I'm like, I'm gonna go in there, I have to make sure we do this job right. So they think that I'm just gonna come in and sell them something. But I really want to get down and dirty and show them that I could do the hard things too. So I really do love sales. And I just recently hired a salesperson, and he's running the majority of my sales leads. But sometimes I'll do a couple just to go back to a customer's house. But, having the owner in their home also creates more of a trust in the company, and actually really closing

some really good jobs there too, as well, but also leads to referrals. Because they tell their friends, "Oh, the owner actually came here and sat down with me. And, she taught me about air conditioning where most sales guys or salespeople don't educate customers." I mean, I hear a lot of my female customers say, Well, I had two guys come may see it, the 14 seers. Like, those guys are doing the easy thing. They want the easy sale, but you need to know what your options are. And let's sit down and discuss. And I'll usually upsell them because they want a better system. They just don't know what a better system is. So I would teach them, their choices and air conditioning as opposed to 14 seers takes us six hours, no big deal. So, I like teaching people and showing them what their options are.

Krystal Hobbs 24:56

So now that you've got a salesperson, how are you transitioning that so that the same education approach is happening with your new salesperson?

Jennifer Reynolds 25:10

The salesperson that I hired is really smart, like, he knows his stuff. And for a week, we did sales calls together. And he's very detail-oriented. And he's a high I, I mean, DiSC profile like me very energetic. I learned some stuff from him that he taught me about American standards, air conditioning, and just systems in general. So he too goes through them through the options with customers. And he's also educational as well. So that helps a lot. And he's very friendly and his follow-up, I think is better than mine. Because I would come back to the office and if I didn't close a sale, I got like a million things I have to do so I would just forget about it where he is way more focused on getting that sale because he's commission-based, obviously. So it's really helped our company too. I do miss it. I miss it so much. I don't know. I'm gonna try to do at least two a week just to get in the customers' houses.

Krystal Hobbs 26:05

That makes sense. I love that. So before you were doing in-home sales, did you have your technicians doing that?

Jennifer Reynolds 26:14

This was my husband's old approach because my husband is a soft salesperson, right? He never liked asking for the sale, he would say, you need an air conditioning system, Jen, send them a quote. And then I would create a quote in our system and email them and close them over the phone. And when somebody would call for a sale, I would have them and I was playing to what was easiest, back in the day. They would go out, they

would gather information, give me all the information I need. And I would create the quote, call them over the phone and then close the sale that way. So when the new guy came on board and give my husband a break, he was like, "No, you need to get the sale closed on the job." And I knew this from my sales training in the gym industry, and my prior AC company but the soft sales approach was easy. So when this other guy started teaching me how to sell in-house, close right there and got a deposit check right there, I was like, "God, I've been doing this wrong for so many years." So, we used to just do it really soft and not, ask for the sale. And then now it's you go to it. And if they don't want to buy right then in there, I'm not going to hard close people because I hate the hard close that use car salesmen approach me. So they say just email me the quote, and we'll go over it tonight, but I'm totally fine with that. I mean, that's what separates us as well, because we're not going to send some pushy guy into your house or pushy girl, for that matter, to make you make a decision right there on the spot. But usually, I would say 40% of the time, they will make a decision there. And right in front of me.

Krystal Hobbs 27:50

Amazing. So switching to you doing the in-home sales and asking for the sale right there has made, I guess a huge impact.

Jennifer Reynolds 28:02

It really, really did. I think we jumped a million dollars in revenue last year, from just me doing in-home sales. But also for me not selling 14 SEER systems not going for the basic. I was educating customers on variable speed compressors, and variable speed air handlers and selling them 1315, my average ticket was probably around \$12,000. So that created way more revenue, we were doing the same amount of jobs, but for a larger ticket price. And that's how we grew so fast.

Krystal Hobbs 28:36

Incredible. I love that. So, Jen, I feel like we've covered a lot here and you have so much insight to offer. So as we clue up, I will ask the question, any last parting words of wisdom for home service business owners who were looking to grow and be a more effective company?

Jennifer Reynolds 29:03

Yes. And it's kind of funny because I just finished my schooling and got my license. And I made friends with everybody in the class. And they're all because they knew I owned a company. And now they're all they have their new license, and they're starting their business, and they're calling me and they're like, Jen, I need your help. How do I make

my phone ring? Because I think you get a license magnet on your truck and all of a sudden, now you're gonna be an AC business. But without customers, you have nothing you may have all your knowledge up here. But if nobody knows who you are, you're useless. So my advice to give to them is you need to get out in the community. You need to meet people. You need to join a BNI group, join the Chamber of Commerce, do whatever you can to meet people. And make sure that they know that you have a skill that they need. Everybody's gonna need an air conditioning person one day and when they know you and like you and trust you and have your business card in their hand, they are going to call you. But you have to meet people. You can't stay in your house and play video games all day long and not go out and promote yourself. So find groups that you can join. And eventually, they'll get to a point where they can't go to those groups anymore because they're doing the work. And they're also running a business. But you have to get out and spread the word. So tell your friends to promote, you ask everybody to plug you on social media, create your Facebook page, or Instagram page, post jobs on it, and ask for friends to share. Which I'm saying, make your phone ring and I'm like, stop right now. But people have to be talking about you. And if you're not out there talking to people, they won't talk about you. So the cheapest way to market yourself is not to get you to know, in every door, direct mail postcard campaign, or get a commercial on TV. It's making people talk about you. So go meet people, pass out business cards, join your chamber of commerce, and have them help you because they want to help you grow your business and BNI. If you could get into a BNI chapter, I suggest that highly because that really helped me grow my business.

Krystal Hobbs 30:56

Amazing, Jen, I think this has been such a great conversation about building relationships in the community, building your brand, and also improving your sales. So I know our listeners are definitely going to want to hear more from you. So what's the best way that they can connect with you or learn more about Jenergy Air Services?

Jennifer Reynolds 31:19

Our Facebook page is active, you can find us at Jenergy Air Services on Facebook. Our Instagram page is really popular as well. I monitor the messages myself once you've wanted to chat with me or message me, you can find me through the Jenergy Air Services Facebook. Our new website is [jenergyair.com](http://jenergyair.com), which we just got uploaded, I'm still working out at it, but it's just got uploaded. And then also, if they ever wanted to talk to me call me at the office. I'm here mostly and I'm always willing to give advice and help other people grow their businesses.

Krystal Hobbs 31:52

Fantastic. And we'll link all of those in the show notes as well. So if you're listening, you can go to [beyondthetoolspodcast.com](http://beyondthetoolspodcast.com) and you will see links there to connect further with Jen. Well, thank you, Jennifer, so much. You've been an absolute delight, and I know our listeners are really going to love this episode.

Jennifer Reynolds 32:11

Good. I can't wait to hear it. I'm excited.

Krystal Hobbs 32:18

Absolutely. Thank you, Jen.

Jennifer Reynolds 32:21

Thank you for the opportunity. I really appreciate it.

Krystal Hobbs 32:28

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Beyond the Tools. If you liked what you heard, please subscribe, rate, and review wherever you get your podcast. I'd love it if you could also share this episode with a fellow contractor who is ready to get off the tools and grow their business. And if you want more leads, sign up for our email list at [reflectivemarketing.com](http://reflectivemarketing.com) where we share weekly marketing insights that you can't get anywhere else. I'm Krystal Hobbs and I hope you'll join me on the next episode of Beyond the Tools. See you next time!