

AN ARISTA BUYERS GUIDE

THE NEW YORK CITY FACILITIES MANAGER'S GUIDE TO CHOOSING AN HVAC COMPANY

**SECRETS TO GETTING THE
PROFESSIONAL & COST-EFFECTIVE
SERVICE YOU NEED**



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Why Facilities HVAC is So Challenging

Getting reliable HVAC service for commercial facilities may seem like a double edged sword. It's sometimes tricky (translation: expensive) to get everything right, but not spending the money to get it right can cost you even more in wasted energy, decreased productivity and even lost business.

Striking the right balance starts with choosing the right vendor. Not every HVAC service operation is qualified to tackle a corporate facility.

Large corporate properties are challenging to service because they have heating, cooling and ventilation requirements that can vary considerably throughout the space. For example, offices have different needs than computer rooms, conference rooms or storage spaces. Even areas that have the same function can have different needs depending on where they are in the building. In fact, the effectiveness of your HVAC system depends on many factors:

- How well it's designed & sized for your space & usage
- Quality and frequency of HVAC service and repair
- Usage factors and environmental conditions, which can be tough to identify

As a Facilities Manager, you're dealing with many different service providers for your company. Yet choosing an HVAC company can be one of the most challenging, especially if you don't happen to be an HVAC expert yourself.

Obviously, you want an HVAC company with the expertise to solve your heating and cooling issues quickly and reliably. But you also want a company that offers great customer service and is easy to do business with.

How can you find all these qualities? Ask about these 9 things when you evaluate a prospective HVAC provider for service, installation and/or repair work.



9 Essential Ways to Vet an HVAC Company

1 Look for certified and screened employees

Checking credentials is one way to be sure an HVAC company's technicians have the technical know-how to do the job and do it well. If your state requires HVAC technicians to be licensed, that's an easy thing to check.

It gets a little more tricky in states (such as New York) that don't have licensing for HVAC contractors. In that case, you need to look for industry-standard certifications and screenings to verify that technicians are properly trained and trustworthy:

- **EPA 608 Certification** is a must for anyone handling refrigerants
- **MSCA (Mechanical Service Contractors of America) STAR Certification** verifies that technicians have completed an intensive education program, have passed a certification exam recently and have completed 3 years of on-the-job training or internships.
- **Background checks** ensure that no technician sent to your site has a criminal record. Make sure that the HVAC company checks all technicians and helpers who could have access to your equipment and facility.

2 Don't overlook insurance coverage

Never hire an HVAC company that does not carry adequate general liability insurance as well as worker's compensation coverage. The insurance protects you if a technician does anything (or fails to do something) that causes damage to your property, or the injury of an employee or customer at your site. Worker's compensation makes sure you won't be responsible for a claim if a technician is injured on your property.

3 Check their understanding of building codes

Particularly when hiring an HVAC company to do an installation, it's critical that they understand the building codes for your city and any legal requirements for working with equipment. Even better, look for a company that takes care of paperwork and obtaining the necessary permits when you make changes. When the HVAC company is responsible for the permits, you can be sure they will do the work to code. Not only does this save you time, but you'll avoid failed inspections, delays and the cost of having sub-par work corrected.





This technical drawing illustrates a mechanical component with various circular features and dimensions. Key elements include:

- Top Section:** A horizontal section with a central hole of diameter $\Phi 100 \cdot 0$. Below it, a smaller feature has a diameter of $\Phi 90 \cdot 0$ and a width of $130 \cdot 0$. Further down, another dimension of $10 \cdot 0$ is indicated.
- Middle Section:** A series of concentric circles representing different diameters: $\Phi 10 \cdot 0$, $\Phi 41 \cdot 0$, $\Phi 60 \cdot 0$, $\Phi 82 \cdot 0$, and $\Phi 88 \cdot 0$.
- Bottom Section:** A curved profile with several small holes. Dimensions $1'8 \cdot 0$, $1'5 \cdot 0$, $1'1 \cdot 0$, and $1'2 \cdot 0$ are shown along the curve.
- Other Features:** A dashed line indicates a hidden edge or centerline. Various arrows point to specific features, and small circles represent holes or rivets.

It pays to keep track of the age and expected life span of all your installed HVAC equipment, so you can plan for equipment obsolescence in your yearly budgeting process. Choose an HVAC company that will get to know you and the needs of your business, and take the time to help you budget for new capital expenditures in advance. That way you're not scrambling when things break down, and you look great to your superiors when you prevent downtime.

8 Never overlook safety

The HVAC company you choose should make safety a priority. The first time a technician works at your site, it's a good idea to pay attention to his safety practices. Does he take precautions to minimize the hazards of working with electricity and refrigerants? Does he handle tools safely? Ask the HVAC company about their practices to prevent carbon monoxide leaks and refrigerant leaks, as well as procedures for preventing accidents.

9 Find a vendor you can trust

When we say find an HVAC service vendor you can trust, that includes:

- Trusting their technical competence in solving complex HVAC service and repair problems
- Counting on them to do what it takes to get the job done right
- Relying on them to consistently act in the best interest of your business

Do you have an HVAC service provider like that? Not sure?

Let us tell you a story that illustrates what we mean.

Arista has a long-time client with a large facility out on Long Island that includes both office space and specialty storage space for film.

For a space like that, there are a variety of heating and cooling requirements. The perimeter offices needed more heat in the winter (due to heat loss from the windows) than the core building space. In the summer, west-facing spaces needed more air conditioning. And the film storage archive (which stored valuable film that had previously been stored in underground caves!) had strict requirements for consistent temperature and humidity control at all times.

Needless to say, we have had to figure out some challenging problems over the years (decades in fact) at this facility.

Here's an example. This large facility is served by about 40 rooftop packaged units. The winter after the units were first installed, they all began to experience mysterious symptoms: the heat would go out when it was particularly windy. Now, this is the kind of thing nobody teaches you in HVAC service school. Why could the wind cause a unit to stop producing heat? It was a problem that could stump many an HVAC service technician.





Here at Arista, we hire not only the brightest, but the most persistent HVAC service people. They are expected to stick with it until they figure out the problem. In this case, our field supervisor determined that the heat was going out due to a combustion draft motor that was locking out those rooftop units when the wind blew in. Then he devised a creative solution: building custom shields out of sheet metal that would block the wind and keep the flame from rolling back.

There was only one problem remaining: convincing the Facilities Manager to try out our solution. He was a tough cookie and a hard sell! He didn't want to lay out the cash to pay for custom shields on all 40 units for an unproven solution. So we made him an offer he couldn't refuse: we would make and install the shields on our dime. If it solved the problem, he would pay for it. If not, it would be at Arista's expense.

To make a long story short, it worked and we got paid!

Actually, there's more. Sometime later, those shields stopped being effective. After some HVAC service detective work, we figured out that the environment's wind dynamic had entirely changed because a neighboring property had removed some huge storage tanks. So we had to modify those wind shields to work under the new conditions.

Then, sometime later, a different problem happened: we noticed that many of those rooftop units were leaking small amounts of refrigerant. Now, when 40 units are leaking even a small amount of refrigerant it's a huge environmental problem not to mention the expense of finding leaks, fixing them and recharging the refrigerant.

Plenty of HVAC service companies would have just gone about the job of finding and fixing the leaks, then charged a fortune for the repair. Or just kept adding more refrigerant and ignoring the cause of the problem altogether.

We felt like that was not the right solution for the customer. Even though those units were out of warranty, we realized that we should approach the manufacturer about the issue since we were talking about so many units experiencing the same problem. Because of our relationship with the manufacturer (and a bit of convincing on the part of our HVAC service team) the manufacturer agreed to replace all the leaky coils. And we installed them at no charge.

Although many HVAC service companies would not operate this way, here at Arista we realize that doing the right thing is a win for everybody. The customer gets a solution that works, and at a very fair price. The manufacturer gets repeat business when the time comes to replace the equipment (that's exactly what happened in this case). And what do we get? Customers who continue to trust us with their business for decades.

Here's the moral of the story:

When you find the HVAC service team that's able to think outside the box to solve the most challenging heating and cooling problems, AND willing to go the extra mile to do the right thing to save you money, don't be afraid to trust them!



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ABOUT ARISTA

Whether you're responsible for the installation of a new HVAC system or inherited legacy equipment, Arista has the experience to service and maintain any system throughout its lifecycle. Across the tri-state area, we're recognized as one of the region's most respected and referred HVAC experts. When you purchase a preventive maintenance service agreement from Arista, you're backed by an industry leader with that has earned its reputation through decades of trustworthy business conduct and quality service.



Peace of mind at a fair price

Your account is managed by a senior Arista technician and backed by an expert staff of over 170 highly trained professionals. Arista boasts a comprehensive program of continuous staff training and professional development on state-of-the-art practices and processes.

Arista clients also enjoy these benefits:

- Quick-to-respond, accessible workforce and a fleet of 100+ vehicles
- 24/7 emergency standby service
- 30,000 sq. ft. corporate warehouse facility stocked with over 55,000 parts
- Industry recognition as the only New York state company to earn both the prestigious MSCA STAR and GreenStar designations
- LEED Accredited Professionals to assist in making smarter HVAC choices

Questions? Call Arista today.

We invite you to call us for a quote or consultation regarding an equipment purchase, maintenance agreement or general service needs. We believe you'll agree that hearing what we have to say will be one of the best decisions you make. Reach an Arista HVAC specialist today at 718-937-4001 or email info@aristair.com.



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